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THE

QUICK OR THE DEAD?

A STUDY.

BY

AMÉLIE RIVES. *Troubetskoy*

"Wanting is—what?"—*Jocoseria.*

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LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

APRIL, 1888.

THE QUICK OR THE DEAD?

I.

THERE was a soughing rain asweep that night, with no wind to drive it, yet it ceased and fell, sighed and was hushed incessantly, as by some changing gale. Barbara was a good deal unnerved by the lanternless drive from the station. The shelving road, seamed with abrupt gullies, lay through murk fields and stony hollows, that she well remembered; in the glimpsing lightning she saw scurrying trees against the suave autumn sky, like etchings on bluish paper; the dry, white-brown grasses swirled about the horses' feet in that windless rain; and after what thunderous fashion those horses pounded stableward! They hurled through narrow gate-ways like stones from a catapult, rushed past ragged trees whose boles seemed leaping to meet them, spun over large stones as though they had been mere fallen leaves.

The black driver urged his smoking team, as though dissatisfied with their provess, by sharp, whistling inward breaths, and upward gestures of his bowed elbows. He was a grotesque figure against the pennons of lightning. Barbara had smiled in spite of her fear, becoming suddenly grave as they just grazed the corner of a slanting, half-ruined wall, formed of rough stones and clay, the "Brookfield Barn" of her childhood, and her fears were not calmed by recalling the fact that only twenty yards ahead stretched a long, ramshackle bridge, formed of loose planks held in place by wild grape-vine branches and a stone placed here and there. This bridge dipped its lithe middle almost into the waters of a hurling, brown stream, known in the surrounding country as "Machunk Creek." There were various legends regarding the origin of this name. The negroes said that a man had crossed it at one time, carrying a chunk of "fat" light-wood; when on the middle of the one plank which then served for bridge, he had dropped his pine-knot, and screamed out desperately,

"Oh! my chunk?" Thence the title of the stream. Barbara, who had always unquestioningly believed this story, could almost fancy that she saw this swart, regretful figure poised now above the hurly of rain-swollen waters,—could almost hear his despairing cry. She thought of getting out of the trap and following his example by crossing on foot, when a dull, whirring rumble, followed by a certain rock-a-bye motion, told her that they were upon the bridge. She shut her eyes with an infallible womanly instinct, although it was then absolutely dark, caught a fold of her inner lip between her teeth, and pinched the back of her left hand firmly in the palm of her right. There was a jolt, a spattering scramble from the horses, another of those sharp, unique sounds from Unc' Joshua the driver, and off they sped once more into the ever-increasing gloom.

It was not until the next day that Barbara found there had been lanterns, with candles ready for lighting, on each side of her. She had been finally whirled in upon the gravel of the carriage-drive of Rosemary, and had dodged the familiar arms of the box-trees, that scraped and rattled against the sides of the flying carriage: then came orange blurs of light, between thick, parted curtains, a semicircular glare over the hall door, and little glowing ladders to right and left of it.

Her aunt Fridiswig had rushed to meet her, had embraced her, by leaving a moist splash upon her elastic, night-cool cheek, and some of a pepper-and-salt shawl-fringe caught in the button of her jacket. She had escaped finally, saying that she would like a cup of tea in her bedroom, and that her aunt could come and bid her good-night, but was on no account to sit up past her usual hour for retiring.

She was leaning now in an old, chintz-covered chair in front of a chestnut-wood fire. How vividly that chair recalled other days! She smiled a little drearily as she ran her fingers into a little slit in the stuff, which she had cut there herself, three years ago, while whittling a peg for her easel. She had brought no maid with her, having looked forward with a certain pleasure to the ministrations of the maid of her girlhood, a dark-brown creature, with a profile like that of Rameses II., and wearing countless slubs of black wool tied up with bits of white string. This person was moving about the room with a light, padding step like that of a cat through wet grass. She was holding up and admiring her mistress's cast-off furs and under-wraps, in the candle-light behind her back, passing her hand up and down the rich sables with a voluptuous ecstasy of appreciation; now tucking them beneath her chin and regarding her reflection in the old-fashioned, gilt-framed toilet-glass, now burying her face in them with a shudderingly delighted movement of her shoulders. Barbara sat listless, her damp hair unwound about her shoulders, tapping the curled ends lightly against the palm of her hand as she dreamed, wide-eyed, in the uncertain firelight. The maid, Martha Ellen, or Rameses, as Barbara called her, came presently and began to warm a pair of red-heeled bedroom slippers by holding them to the blaze, at the same time lifting one of her pretty, yellow-lined hands, palm outward, to protect her face.

The gesture went through Barbara like a knife. How Val used to laugh at it, when Martha Ellen went through the same perform-

ance of warming his slippers! She put up both hands to her breast with a movement of anguish. Tears clustered hot and stinging on her lashes, and great breaths that were deeper than sobs thrilled through her from head to foot. Ah, she had been a fool doubtless to come here, for, in the natural course of things, she must expect such painful occurrences twenty times a day; and yet there was a sorrowful sweetness in it, too. She let drop her hands, and, relaxing her tense figure, sent a slow, miserable look around the room. It was spacious, airy, Southern. A delicate, dawn-like mixture of rose and gray characterized its furniture. The large, carved bed, of mahogany, had hangings of rose and white. There were white goat-skins here and there on the gray carpet, and some very good water-colors, by French artists, above the chimney-piece. The chairs and couches were many and capacious. The number of mirrors suggested a certain vanity on the part of its occupant: there were eight in all, none of them small, and all framed heavily in old gilt. A mahogany writing-table near one of the windows had heavy brass handles, awink in the fitful light. Barbara rose suddenly, and, putting back her heavy hair, began to walk up and down the room on soft, slipperless feet.

"Wait, Miss Barb'ra, honey," urged Rameses, approaching her mistress on her knees and holding out the now very-warm slippers "You'll war out dem pretty stockin's."

Barbara stopped and stared down at her absently, then turned gently away and re-began her long, noiseless stride.

"You can go," she said. "Never mind the slippers. I'll call you presently."

As Rameses left the room, Barbara locked the door through which she had passed, and then, turning, with her hand still on the key, took another long, scrutinizing survey of the room.

Presently she went to one of the windows and drew aside the curtain. The skirt of the sky was strewn from hem to hem with little, flittering, filmy clouds, through which a wet moon shone vaporous; the tulip-trees, nearly stripped of their golden, October leaves, thrust their empty seed-cups out and up, like so many elfin goblets, to be filled with weird mist-wine; the wind blew in puffs, like a thing breathing in its sleep, and the rain had ceased. Barbara's hair made a mellow glow in the wan light, and the already scarlet holly-berries blinked back at her from the frothy gloom of the shadow-waves. A horse neighed impatiently just below, and was answered from a far meadow. She could see the light from her windows streaking the faded grass on the lawn. With a sigh she let the curtain drape itself once more in its accustomed folds, pausing to rest both hands on the mahogany writing-table, and again devouring the room with that slow, absorbing gaze. As her returning eyes fell upon the table on which she leaned, she gave a strange cry, and pressed backward among the window-curtains, still keeping a fixed, horrified look on the table. How bathos will intrude upon pathos! It is the flippant Tweedledum of a most serious Tweedledee. The possible viper from which poor Barbara shrank was nothing more nor less than a half-smoked cigar, which lay in a neat little ash-tray among its ashes, just as the man who had been smoking it had placed it there three years

ago. Suddenly she fell on her knees beside the table, and, snatching up the bit of tobacco, kissed it again and again. She was a woman with an almost terrible sense of humor, and presently she began to laugh, not hysterically, but quietly, appreciatively. She saw how ridiculous a thing that act of hers would seem to an on-looker. And then again she kissed it, and, catching her face into her two hands, went into a shuddering passion of sobs, tearless, noiseless, and terrible.

All this will not seem overstrained when one knows its origin.

In this room, among these identical articles, just three years ago Barbara Pomfret had passed the first three months of an absolutely joyous married life; two years ago her husband had died, and she had come back an utterly unhappy woman to the scene of her former happiness. Every chair, book, knick-knack, rug, in this room, was associated in some way with her husband. The very pictures, the toilet-glass, the ornaments on the mantel-shelf, all held for her some memory which stabbed her as she looked; and yet it was of her own will that she had returned. She did not wish to forget, and she could not better remember than in a place so fraught with memories. She had not, however, calculated the full poignancy of the grief that was about to claim her. As vanished scenes swept across her inner sight, there came with them words and looks and tones innumerable. His arms held her, his breath warmed her, his voice was in her ear, vibrating, actual. She leaped to her feet, stumbling over her heavy gown; her fascinated, dreading eyes sought the vague gloom behind her, as she hurried to the door. The room was full of his voice, of his sighing, of his laughter. She breathed gaspingly, and caught at the key to unlock the door. It was stiff with long disusage, and refused to turn. There again! his laughter, about her, above her, and his lips at her ear. She could hear the words, loving, reckless, impassioned words, not meet for a ghost to utter: "Barbara! Barbara! your curled lips are a cup, and your breath is wine. You make me drunk!—drunk!"

She grasped the key with both hands, panting, sobbing, her eyes strained with a mighty, overwhelming panic. Still the senseless bit of brass resisted. She caught up a fold of her gown and wound it about the handle. Now his very lips were on her: they drew her breath, her life.

"O God, help me! O God, let the door open! let it open!"

Miss Fridiswig, alone with her knitting, in the dining-room just below, heard a sudden noise as of falling, and burst out into the hall, to meet Rameses with her eyes goggling. They made a simultaneous rush up the stairway, and nearly fell over Barbara, who was lying on her face, half in and half out of her room.

Rameses, who was as strong as most men of her size, lifted the poor girl bodily, and laid her upon the bed.

They did all the disagreeable, useless things that people generally do to a fainting woman, and by and by, when it was time for her to return to consciousness, she opened her dark eyes, and drew several short, difficult breaths.

"I know,—I know,—" she said.

"You know what?" coaxed Miss Fridiswig.

"I know,—I know,—" repeated Barbara,—*"I know—where I am. Must get—a—new lock—to-morrow. Rameses—sleep—in here—to-night. What's o'clock?"*

"Mos' twelve," said Rameses, who was holding Barbara's bare feet in her hands. "You go tuh bade, Miss Fridis. Miss Barb'ra, you go tuh bade too."

"Yes, darling, you must,—for my sake," urged Miss Fridiswig.

"Not yet; not yet," said Barbara.

She tried to sit up, and fell back among the big pillows. A sudden shivering shook her throughout. She made another effort, and got her arm about Rameses' neck.

"Help me—" she panted, "help me—off the bed—quick. That sofa there—"

When they had made her comfortable on the sofa, she closed her eyes and lay so still that they thought she had fainted again; but as Rameses moved to fetch some of the noxious remedies, she pressed down a fair hand on the girl's wool, signifying that she was to remain beside her.

"You go tuh bade, Miss Fridis," said Rameses. "'Tain't no use two on us settin' up."

"No, not a bit," said Barbara. "Please go, Aunt Fridis."

"Ah, let me be of use! let me be of use!" wailed Miss Fridiswig, casting herself on her knees beside Rameses, and leaving another warm splash on Barbara's inert hand.

Barbara, who never willingly hurt the feelings even of a cabman, did not know what to do, until it suddenly occurred to her to faint again. When she came to herself from this simulated swoon, Rameses had packed Miss Fridiswig, willy-nilly, to her virgin slumbers, and was resuscitating the dead fire by breathing on it, after the Biblical method.

Barbara lay watching her, stung again by an almost intolerable pang. How often had she lain on that very sofa and watched Val trying to imitate the negro method of kindling a fire, until his puffed-out cheeks made him into a very excellent likeness of a wind-god couchant!

When the wreathing, lilac flames began to whirr about the fresh logs, she called the girl to her.

"Are you very sleepy?" she said, smiling, a beautiful smile that Martha Ellen remembered. It was associated with countless gifts, and seemed to breathe of the summer, a season endeared above all others to the sensitive little black.

"Lor'! Yuh looks jes' like yuh use tuh!" she exclaimed, regardless of Barbara's question. "I thought yuh done give up smilin' when I seed yuh fust tuh-night."

"Did you?" said Barbara. She smiled again, and yielded her hand graciously to the girl's caresses, repeating her question. Martha Ellen asserted that she didn't feel sleep "nowhar near 'bout her."

"But it must be very late?" Barbara said. "Are all the other servants in bed?"

Martha Ellen thought so, and slipped a lithe arm about her mistress, who stood still for an instant, while the apparent seething of the articles about her subsided. She was tall, and her figure in its silverish dressing-gown of white silk gleamed like a streak of moonlight in the rich dusk. I once saw a stem of white wild-flowers lean against a charred pine as she was now leaning against her dark-skinned waiting-woman.

Presently she moved a step or two. The girl moved with her, bending beneath the bare white arm that rested heavily across her shoulders. As they paused again, she turned her face up, with a sideward, expectant movement.

"I was going to say," Barbara began, "that if you know where the little brass bed is,—the one I used to sleep in as a little girl,—I would help you to get it."

"Naw, you ain't; you ain't gwine he'p me git nuthin'," said Martha Ellen, positively.

Her mistress was as positive. "It is entirely too heavy for you to lift alone," she said. "If you know where it is, I am coming with you to help you."

They went together down a narrow corridor that turned abruptly several times, Martha Ellen in front with a candle that died out to a blue splutter in the many draughts.

Following this elfish light, Barbara found herself at last in the nursery of her childhood. She looked upward and remembered the very cracks in the plaster ceiling: there was the identical one that she had thought resembled the profile of George Washington on the postage-stamps. Underneath it stood the brass cot. It was somewhat tarnished, and the bows of pale-blue ribbon that enlivened its head-piece were decidedly draggled. She untied them mechanically and rolled them around her fingers, while Martha Ellen took off the unsheeted mattresses. How long it was since she had slept in that gay little bed! There is nothing that makes us seem so unreal, so unfamiliar to ourselves, as some pleasant child-possession seen unexpectedly in "unhappy womanhood.

She knelt long beside it that night, with palms pressed hard against her eyes, forgetting to pray, in a great, struggling effort to imagine herself once more a child, pleading for her pony's tail to "grow as long as before the calf chewed it," for "Mammy to be white in heaven," for "Satan to be forgiven after a long, long, long time," for herself to be made a "good little girl and not so cross with Agnes."

At first she was not conscious of any especial emotion, as she bent against the cold linen of the turned-back bedclothes; she had no particular sensation either of happiness or unhappiness; but presently vast waves of passionate regret, and longing, and rebellion, surged over her, each one, as it swelled and formed, more vast and annihilating than the other. The undertow seemed dragging her down, down. God's imagined face took on a horrible grinning. The ministering angels seemed deformed creatures who writhed, and twisted, and uttered wanton gigglings as they circled about the Throne after the fashion of the

witches in "Macbeth" about the caldron. Nothing seemed good; nothing seemed kind. She could not even think of her husband as having existed. He was a mere mass of repulsive formlessness in a slimy wedge of earth; perhaps he was not even that. She imagined his ghastly skeleton tricked out in all the mockery of fashionable attire. What delightful, smart, of-the-world-worldly coats he had worn! Why, if he were a skeleton now, one could see his tailor's name in gilt letters through his spinal column! Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha! She had laughed silently at first, then in a choking whisper, then in a ringing peal of sound that clashed through the silent house, chilling the blood in Martha Ellen's rigid, black body.

It did not occur to her to go to her mistress. She sat up on the pallet where she was sleeping for the night, folded herself in her own embrace, and muttered between her clacking teeth,—

"Miss Barb'ra done gone mad! she done gone mad! *I dunno* what tuh do! Gord knows *I dunno* what tuh do!" Then all as suddenly the laughter ceased.

There seemed to Barbara to be some glowing, resplendent presence about her, lifting up her heart as it were with both hands. She took down her palms from her strained eyes, and stared into the almost absolute gloom. She even reached out her arms into it. The darkness seemed to cling about her. Little, every-day noises distracted her attention,—the snap of the dying fire as it settled among its ashes, the lull and sigh of an awakening wind through the branches of the tulip-trees, the noise that a mouse made dragging some little thing along the floor. She rose stiffly to her feet, and cowered shivering down among the icy sheets. Again she held out her arms. The pressure of a warm, curly head against her breast was with her as an actuality.

"Oh, Val," she whispered,—"*oh, Val! Oh, darling,—mine!—mine!—mine!* Touch me, come to me, here in the darkness,—here where you used to love me. I will not be afraid,—no, not the least, not the least. Oh! God—God! he does not hear me! he cannot hear me! he does not care any more."

She flung herself half out of her childhood's bed upon the large one of carved mahogany near which it stood, sobbing, shuddering, kissing wildly the silken coverlet and pillows that rose softly through the thick firelight, so finally slept, worn out, desolate, chilled to the very core of soul and body.

II.

Rosemary was one of those old Virginia houses which have not been desecrated with modern furniture, as gray hair with hair-dye. Its rooms were gloomy in contour and atmosphere, but cheered by bright hangings and flowers, like an old face with smiles. The house of deep-red brick showed in sanguine streaks through tangled vines, something after the fashion in which a Nereid's face might blush behind her veil of verdant hair. There were many old portraits in the large hall, as darkly ruddy in color as the outer walls of the mansion which they adorned. An old spinet stood in the music-room, from which instrument Miss Fridiswig used to coax forth ghastly jinkings (this

spinet could not utter anything so liquid as a jingle) on Sunday afternoons.

It was a most lovely old place to die in, but not, assuredly, one in which to live. There was a suggestion of loneliness even about its vegetable life which seemed depressing. Its trees, with the exception of the tulip-poplars and acacias, were all mateless, not two of any kind. Its flowers did not grow socially in beds, but here and there throughout the tangled grass. The very stalks of corn in the kitchen-garden leaned away from each other. There was one dog, one cat, one horse, one vehicle which Miss Fridiswig called a carry-all, and one aged black to drive it. Barbara preferred walking, to this means of locomotion, and was sometimes out from early morning until the woods were full of lean shadows, that seemed as hungry as herself.

With what an appetite she used to return to Rosemary! She sometimes drank three cups of tea, and ate two partridges, together with numberless biscuits, for supper. Miss Fridiswig, after having asserted on several occasions that she would "ruin her stummick," considered an unpleasant duty to have been performed, and refrained from further remark. Miss Fridiswig was amiable and unobtrusive, and, when she did not perform on the spinet, Barbara liked to think that she was in the house.

October in Eden could not have been more perfect than October in Virginia,—indeed, far less so, as the ever-verdant leaves in that garden could never have fallen brownly to the ground and so rustled almost to the very knees of a person walking through them.

During these autumnal rambles, Barbara seemed to leave her wedded self at Rosemary, and to pursue her maiden self with all the sweet if sad persistency of a Dryad seeking her forsaken tree.

It was as if Happiness lurked somewhere in the golden-glad depths of those many-stemmed woods, waiting only for the clasp upon her kissing wings.

A sudden resolve one day took possession of Barbara. It occurred to her while putting on her gloomy bonnet of heaviest crape. She tossed it from her with a sudden resolve, and unwound the severe plaits of her copper-brown hair, allowing them to curl richly into a floating background for the clear but vivid pallor of her face. Ten years appeared to have fallen from her with that burnished coronal. The airy grace of girlhood seemed entangled in her airy tresses. She then as hastily put off her sombre gown, and, going to an old press, felt along its shelves until she had brought to light several articles, in which she began to dress herself. Her toilet accomplished, she looked like a girl of sixteen who had gotten herself up in as near emulation of some favorite brother as possible. This boyish costume consisted of a dark-blue flannel shirt, a short, clay-stained corduroy skirt, a leather belt, a pair of chamois-skin shooting-gaiters, and a pair of stout laced boots.

She gave one fleeting glance at herself in the toilet-glass, and then, pulling on a dark-blue Tam O'Shanter as she ran, fled from the room, down-stairs, out of door, far into the wind-stirred forest.

She sank at last upon a fallen tree, and glanced, panting gayly, at

the beauty surrounding her. A flying squirrel whirled past her head, and, alighting on a bole just beyond her, began its light, scratching ascent. A ground-swell of wind, as it were, just lifted the overlapping leaves about her feet; while she could hear the occasional patter of an acorn in the gold-barred silence to right and left, like the intermittent tick of some genial old clock, that disliked to tell more constantly the passing of such glorious hours.

There was a soft blue haze lying close to the forest-floor, through which its boles and undergrowth darted blackly upward, like figures from some tremendous witch-smoke, and a trail of Virginia creeper spurting redly across the foreground suggested the blood-spurt from the victim in the unholy sacrifice.

Barbara rested movelessly, absorbing the beauty about her through the very pores of her soul. The roots of the fallen tree against which she leaned, reaching crookedly towards a bough of golden maple leaves overhead, reminded her of the fingers of a miser scooped to clutch his gold. She laughed with a sudden whim.

"You shall have it!" she said, springing out and grasping the bough, which she shook back and forth with all her strong young might. She was an enchanting Danaë under the shower of gold leaves, the supple lines of her strained figure melting into the vaporous blue-gray of the wood beyond, her eyes laughing above the unusual carmine in her cheeks.

It seemed a pity that the only witness to this ravishing scene should be a little darky, with an embarrassing paucity of breeches, and a ragged coat which trained upon the ground behind.

He paused, grasping a young sapling which he was dragging after him, and gazed up at Barbara, who, pausing also, gazed down at him. He was short and wizened, and had narrow, blue-black feet, upon which he stood gingerly, the yellow-lined great toes curled heavenward. His oily eyes were small, his countenance a dense bitumen hue, his inner lips, hanging outward with astonishment, of a pale, moist pink, like that of a toadstool rained upon. He was impish and uncouth even for a little nigger, and looked like a crayon sketch after a painting of Robin Goodfellow.

"How-d'e-do?" said Barbara.

He replied with the staccato precision of a telegraph machine,—

"I'se fus'-rate. How's yo'se'f?"

"Thanks, I am in excellent health also," replied Barbara. "Will you tell me where you are going?"

"Chissnuts," said the imp, laconically.

"Chestnuts!" echoed Barbara. She loosed the maple bough, which swung in stately nudity to its accustomed place, and came forward dusting lightly together her gloved palms. The knotty miser-roots were now full of the plenteous gold, and she looked back at them over her shoulder and smiled, before addressing the boy, to whom presently she said, in a pleasant voice,—

"Will you let me go with you, Robin Goodfellow?"

"'Tain't my name," he answered, with the same brevity which had heretofore distinguished his remarks.

"No, but it is my name for you," said Barbara, gravely. "What have you to say to that?"

He lowered one of his taut big toes, and burrowed with it in the soft loam.

"Nothin'," he finally announced.

"Shall I come with you?"

"Ef yuh wants."

"I do want. I want some chestnuts."

At this the imp grinned cunningly. "Yuh'll have tuh pay fuh 'em, den," said he.

"I'll do that now," returned Barbara, taking a quarter from a netted purse, which she always carried for this very purpose.

His little eyes seemed to dart towards it like those of a crab, and he drew a swift tongue over both podgy lips, with the air of a *gourmet* regarding a well-cooked ortolan, while the cunning look on his face increased in proportion as the grin vanished.

"You gimme dat fus', 'n' den I'll thrash de tree fuh yuh," he suggested.

"You thrash the tree for me first, and then I'll give you this," replied Barbara, firmly.

"All ri'," he said, a certain glaze which avarice had spread like a coat of varnish over his black skin vanishing, to leave it as dully grimy as before.

"By the way, what is your name?" Barbara asked, as she walked beside him on their way to the chestnut-tree.

"Mos' anythin'."

"Well, what is it as a rule?"

"Mh?" said the child.

"What does your mother call you?"

"'Honey' when she's please', 'n' 'you Satan' when she ain'."

"Hadn't you rather be called Robin Goodfellow than Satan?"

"I don' keer."

"If I give you this quarter and another for the chestnuts, will you answer when I call you Robin Goodfellow?"

"Mh—mh."

She put the quarter in his upreached palm, and he transferred it thence to one of his cheeks, the monkey-like pouch where a young negro carries most of his valuables. It made an eerie clinking against his teeth as he talked; and when she finally bade him good-by and gave him the other quarter, he tucked it away in the opposite cheek.

Barbara was so pleased with this unique and non-committal young imp that she took him shortly into her service. He carried her easel and color-box when she sketched, and occupied the back seat of her Canadian fishing-wagon when she drove. During her day-long rambles he was nearly always to be seen trotting at her heels, and he slept on a bearskin rug just outside of her door. She had at first attempted to dress him picturesquely, but the result was not encouraging. When Beauregard Walsingham (for such Barbara discovered to be his real name) first beheld himself in his mistress's mirror, thus attired, he gave vent to a choked howl of dismay and anger, and fled to the linen-

closet. From thence he was unearthed, not too gently, by Rameses, who had no liking for him, and usually spoke of him as "that limb," having declared him to be "ez ugly ez home-made sin 'n' ez black as the hinges uv midnight."

On being asked the cause of his excitement, Beauregard replied that he "wa'n't no circus clown, en folks done think he cunjud (conjured) if he war dem dar things."

Barbara attempted to reason with him, but it was useless; and she at last adopted a stern and superior pose, and had the butler place him bodily on the back seat of the fishing-wagon. He sat there, it is true, but the fixed war-light in his greasy eyes was ominous.

His duty on these occasions was to open the many gates which distinguish Albemarle neighborhoods. The first one on this afternoon gave almost directly upon the brawlings of Machunk Creek, and after Barbara had driven through, and was waiting for him to resume his place behind her, he turned abruptly, and, with respectful but dogged determination, waded out into the middle of the stream, cast himself upon his scarlet-sashed little stomach, and rolled. A muddy unity of tone was the result. Barbara looked ahead as if nothing had happened, until he began to climb into the cart; she then informed him that he was to follow on foot the rest of the way, and she made the occasion live forever in his memory by driving eight miles. It probably kept him from taking cold, but it also subdued his dauntless spirit, because, although he made no signs of giving in, when Rameses girded his loins next day with another as brilliant sash, he wore it meekly until Barbara herself removed it before he went to bed.

Having conquered, she, woman-like, bestowed upon him that for which he had fought,—namely, an ordinary costume, composed of dark brown cloth and silver buttons. So closely did this attire fit, and so perfectly did it match young Walsingham's complexion, that at a little distance he looked like a bronze nudity picked out with silver.

He was a strange, subtle little creature, of few words and secretive habits. He had a melancholy instrument upon which he used to play "Home, Sweet Home." Rameses called it a "mouth-harp," and it used to set all the dogs howling,—for Barbara had bought two greyhound pups, which she was training.

Between the spinet and the mouth-harp, Barbara was sometimes very miserable; but she could not find it in her heart to separate Beauregard from the one object of his affection, which actually slept in his dusky bosom every night.

Her girlhood's costume, once adopted, was worn as a constancy, the walks which she took being of too wild and secluded a nature to subject her to remark from any of the neighbors. She resembled the heroine of a witch-tale, figuring all the week as a bright-eyed, wild-haired brownie, and becoming on the Sabbath a sad, unspeaking woman, with demure dark lids over eyes yet more demure and dark.

During those vagrant autumn days she became mistress of a rare art, that of controlling her thoughts. She found that by a tremendous effort she could whistle them to fist and keep them hooded there, so that, although they fretted and shook their bells, they did not soar away into

the open and bring down unsavory winged things which she would rather remained a-wing. Those first, horrible imaginings haunted her no more. Her husband was with her now as the glad-eyed lover of her young wifehood. She remembered his rollicking laughter, recalled the movements of his eyes, walked often with the very warmth of his arm about her body. She would not allow herself to think of the coming snow, and her life seemed a supportable waiting, a not altogether sad wandering after something which at length she would discover.

She returned one evening far into the orange-belted radiance of the heavy twilight. There were boughs of glowing leaves about her shoulders, which framed her face as though in reality she were a Dryad, looking through the screen of her guarding foliage, and she held the greyhounds in a light leash, singing, as she walked, parts of a song that her husband had especially liked :

“Bravo! Bravo! Punchinello!
Bravo, Pun-chi-ne-ell-o!”

She had not a strong voice, but it was clear and carried well, and was pleasant to drowsy ears,—a twilight and firelight voice,—one in which to sing elf-songs, and ghostly ditties, or some such lay as this story of Punchinello.

As she came up the long, narrow lawn, overbent by tall acacias, she could see the wavering glare of a large fire in the drawing-room. How often she and Valentine had hailed that leaping, twisting light on their home-coming after just such walks! She ceased suddenly to sing, and dropped on her knees in the rank grass, while the greyhounds leaped awkwardly upon her, having no instinct to tell them when women kneel for prayer and when for play. She had been thrilled with a possessing sense of his nearness: he was about her, close against her with the other impalpable essences of this still, gold-gray evening. The light in the drawing-room died down, almost went out, then leaped higher than ever: some one had thrown on more wood. Kneeling there on the windy lawn had chilled and dispirited her. She rose to her feet, still grasping the gay leaf-masses, and entered the house.

With her hand on the drawing-room door, she paused. It seemed as though an actual force was urging her away; and yet there was no one there. She turned and looked first over one shoulder, then over the other, with a bird-swift gesture. No one. The puppies left outside were whining and scratching for admittance. She hesitated, thinking for a moment that she would let them in, but some strange feeling withheld her. Then tossing wide the door with an impetuous movement, she went rushing into the very middle of the room, where she regretted her impulsiveness, for she saw that a man was standing before the fire. He was bending slightly towards the blaze and scooping his hands to it,—a very ordinary gesture, but one that hurt her. A man may be individual even in his method of warming his hands, and this was her husband's gesture.

During the moment in which this knowledge pierced her heart, the man saw her, and came forward. She began to think that she was in a

dream,—the figure, the step, the pose, were so identically her husband's; but the greatest shock of all was when he spoke.

"You must be Barbara," was what he said, and the voice was Val's voice. The room swung about, and the fire leaped forward to meet her. She put out her hand, letting fall the red leaves which she still held. The man who had spoken with her husband's voice now supported her to a chair with the very trick of arm that he had been wont to use. She shut her eyes, fearing absolutely to look up, and put out both hands, as though to push him from her, while he kneeled to place a footstool under her feet, and then rose and slipped a cushion between her head and the stiff chair-back. During these different movements he uttered various disjointed sentences: "So sorry! Ought to have waited. Ought to have rung for lights. Firelight confused you. By the way, I'm Jock,—Val's cousin, you know. He told me so much—I—I mean I've heard so much about you,—feel as if I knew you, you know. Are you all right now? Do look at me: it'll steady you. There's—there's a strong likeness."

"I had rather rest a little,—thank you so much," said Barbara. The firelight through her hot lids made them seem like live coals resting upon her eyes, while her mind and body seemed to sweep in circles like a bird at poise. He had unconsciously named the very thing that she dreaded. Were this "strong likeness" of feature as marked as every other, she thought that endurance would be impossible. She ventured to lift her eyes to the hand resting on her chair-arm: it might have been thrust from the grave. She gave a sobbing cry and started to her feet. Dering rose also, startled and alarmed.

"You are ill," he said. "Shall I call your maid?"

"I will call her," said Barbara; "I will call her." She flew past him to the door, passed through it, and was gone.

Dering's sensations were not enviable. He walked to the fire and began to warm his hands again.

"I flatter myself that I know something about men," he said, rather grumpily, "but I'm hanged if I know a thing about women." He then nestled down with a boyish movement of entire content into the chair that Barbara had abandoned, and waited for further developments.

Nothing occurred until half an hour later, when Barbara herself re-entered the room. He scarcely knew her at first, in her long black crape gown, with her diadem of lustrous braids replaced, and he wondered, as he took the hand which she now held out, if she were ever going to lift her lids.

"She's handsome," he said to himself, "but she's too blonde and too big. Her waist's too big—no, it's her shoulders—no, she's all too big. Her hair's too red—no, there's too much of it—no, it's the way she wears it."

Barbara, who was very apt at such things, did not rightly fathom his thoughts on this occasion. She believed that he was pondering on her pallor and red lids, and wondering if she had been enough in love with his cousin to justify such a quantity of crape. If acknowledged beauties could know the thoughts of most men when first introduced to them, there would not be so much vanity in the world.

Barbara, who was an acknowledged beauty, did not strike any responsive chord in Dering until she turned him her profile in settling the folds of her dress. It was vigorous, classic, enthralling, and he admitted as much to himself while regarding it.

"Good brow," he meditated; "good nose; good line of lips,—well balanced, upper and lower equal; good chin, splendid chin, massive, but not heavy. Lots of will-power,—no end to it."

"Won't you sit down?" said Barbara. She did not look at him, and held a hand-screen between the flames and her face, so that he could no longer see it.

"Thanks," said Dering, resuming his nestling position.

Suddenly Barbara laughed.

"You remind me of a dog turning around before he lies down," she said, in explanation.

"Lots of people have said that," he replied, easily, laughing also.

Barbara winced a little, and the light died from her eyes. She had heard a great deal of Jock Dering, and was prepared to like him most heartily, but if he continued to speak to her in her husband's very voice, how was she to bear it? They talked a little in a desultory way, and presently a half-burned log fell crashing down upon the hearth. As Dering stooped to replace it, Barbara involuntarily lifted her eyes to his face. He was startled by the soft huddling against him of her unconscious body.

III.

The extraordinary likeness which John Dering bore to his dead cousin Valentine Pomfret was one of those rare but not fictitious freaks in which heredity sometimes indulges. Twin brothers are often less alike than had been those two young men, and the fact that Dering was Pomfret's junior by a few years was overcome by the further fact that for a few years poor Pomfret had been dead; Barbara therefore beheld in the Dering of to-day the exact reproduction of her husband of three years ago. Voice, gesture, figure, and face were all identical. There was the same curling brown hair above a square, strongly-modelled forehead; eyes the color of autumn pools in sunlight; the determined yet delicate jut of the nose; the pleasing unevenness in the crowded white teeth, and the fine jaw which had that curve from ear to tip like the prow of a cutter. An unusual face, one in which every new acquaintance would not be apt to recall hints of some friend or relative.

In manner he was delightful,—abrupt, frank, original, and a trifle egotistical: in a word, Valentine Pomfret over again.

Barbara, who had not of course distinguished these further similarities between the quick and the dead, was sufficiently overcome by the physical likeness. Its memory swept over her, now with a species of horror, now with a sort of joy. She was in turns flooded with rapture at having seen again her husband's face, and torn with an impotent rage that any human creature should dare to move and have his being in so exact a similitude of that dear body. She experienced the feeling, intensified a hundred times, which rends a mother in seeing some care-

less friend or sister flaunting the garments of her dead child. Now she yearned for another sight of the dear face; now she flung the idea from her as utterly unnatural and abhorrent. She snatched Val's miniature, warm with her bosom, and pressed it to her lips, then opened the thin gold case, and hungrily fed upon its every tint and contour. When she finally dropped it back beneath her gown, the case, having grown cold in the air, startled her flesh, as a certain fact had startled her mind while gazing upon the portrait within. His pictured face was not so much like him as was the face of his cousin, John Dering! She was in her bedroom, and alone, so did not forbear to cry out, and moan, and talk to herself in panting fragments, as she swept about the room, taking first a vibrating stride or two, then leaning against some piece of furniture and pressing away the hair from her face with both hands; then crouching and trembling with hidden eyes, or rushing from wall to wall with all the restrained, breathless eagerness of some prisoned, pantherish creature whose efforts for freedom had long been vain.

As she flung herself exhausted into an arm-chair near the fire, the wide sleeve of her dressing-gown fell back, revealing the smooth flesh of her arm, stained violet here and there by the rich veins.

She bent, uttering a sharp, inarticulate cry, and caressed it with slow movements of her cheek. She remembered how he had loved to kiss her delicate, inner arm when dressed in this very gown, and even as she smiled for the dear memory there came upon her, with a surge of rebellion and revolt, the knowledge that he was now above such fleshly pleasures; that he would not now care for any of the sweet, warm, trivial things for which he had once cared so passionately. She leaped up, lifting her hands high above her head and pressing them agonizedly together. She tried to realize that he was a spirit, a purified essence, a soul merely; and as the idea took shape within her, she shrank from and loathed it, then fell into bitter human weeping, sometimes pleading for death, sometimes asking that God would work only His will with her.

Dering, who was happily ignorant of the effect which his appearance had produced, called again the next afternoon, to inquire for her health, but was told that she had gone to walk. He remained for some time, hoping that she would return, but took his leave after an hour, wondering somewhat that a woman who fainted so easily should trust herself alone on such long walks. The next time he saw her was in the heart of an oak-plantation called the "Tarleton Woods." He had plunged recklessly into its unknown vistas after a covey of partridges, and had fancied himself lost, until he came upon Barbara.

She was seated high above him in the crotch of an old tree, and the full light fell upon her in splashes through the leaves, like an overflow of some bright liquid. The greyhounds were whimpering and scratching at the bole of the tree, and she teased them by swinging the loop of their leash just out of reach.

Dering spoke when within a few yards of her. "So glad you are all right!" he cried, boyishly. "I called three times, but you were always out. You seem possessed of the spirit of locomotion."

She looked at him from beneath her loosened hair, and controlled

her voice successfully in replying. She said that she was very sorry to have missed him, but that she was generally out all day in both good and bad weather.

"Can't I call in the evening, then?" asked Dering.

She could not think of any plausible excuse, and said, "Yes."

"You don't say it very cordially," he objected, but in blithe, unoffended tones. "Perhaps you'd rather I wouldn't come? Perhaps people bore you?"

Barbara could not help laughing. This seemed to embolden Dering, who advanced and looked up at her. "Do you know I think we'd be such good friends?" he said, genially.

"Why, I've scarcely spoken two words to you," replied Barbara.

"One feels things sometimes," said Dering, not at all discomfited.

"I was sure I would like you as soon as I saw your profile."

"And how about it now that you have seen my full face?"

"Oh, I like it better and better. It has a generous, sensuous breadth that is splendid."

"Nothing else in 'ous,' I hope?" said Barbara, dryly.

"Nothing you wouldn't like. I see you think me very free and easy. People often do."

"I don't wonder," said Barbara, laughing again.

"Well, as long as you aren't angry I don't care. You laugh like a sport."

"Like a what?" said Barbara.

Dering shifted his position, and lounged against the tree-trunk.

"Yes, it's slang," he replied. "I've an awful habit of using slang: I'm afraid I'd use it to the Almighty if I were suddenly translated."

"You'd probably have to be translated for him to understand," began Barbara, merrily, then stopped and colored.

"That's a dreadfully bad pun," she said, with humility.

"If you weren't up a tree already, I wouldn't spare you," answered Dering.

"That's much worse than mine."

"I know it: I did it on purpose. Are you going to let me call?"

"Why, yes, of course. Why do you doubt it?"

"I don't know. I'm an odd fellow. I fancied you had taken a dislike to me."

"No, I have not," asserted Barbara, in a decided voice.

Then she grew very pale, and looked at him strangely. "I will explain what made you believe that some day," she said.

She did not understand the violent revulsion of feeling which had come upon her. She was glad, delighted, to be looking at him. It did not shock her as she had dreaded. She felt light-hearted and gay as she had not hoped to feel any more. She was only afraid that he would notice the absorbed, thirsting stare with which her eyes returned again and again to his eyes, and tried to fix them on other objects,—the dance of the sunlit leaves, the greyhounds, a cardinal-bird that seemed to streak the veiled background with its flame-like flashings. In vain. Something of the feeling that impels a wilful drunkard

seized upon her. She would intoxicate her bodily self with this long-denied sight; she would drink him into the waste places of her soul and make memory green again; she would—here a sudden shivering overtook her—why should she not pretend in truth that he was her husband? It would be known only to herself; an empty pleasure; a mere painting of delight; heaven reflected in a pool. The shivering became so violent that Dering noticed it.

"You are cold," he exclaimed, quickly. "Don't you think you stay out too late in these chilly autumn evenings? You see the sun is almost set."

"Yes, I must go," said Barbara.

He reached up and swung her to the ground. It was a light, easy gesture, full of the restrained power that women like. To feel a strong man minister to their fragile wants has all the fascination of watching a steam-hammer employed in the frivolous occupation of cracking almonds. To see the power that could crush transformed into the power that befriends is in both cases blood-stirring. And then his strong shoulders beneath her hands were so like Val's shoulders, and the glint of his smile Val's own, and his impetuous way of piloting her over rough places,—all Val's. She stopped suddenly and put up her hands to her throat with a wild gesture. Dering pulled up short also, terribly alarmed, and fearing that she was going to faint again. He could not think what he was to do in these lonely woods on the edge of dark with a swooning woman, and a slight feeling of irritation stung him.

"Good Lord!" he said, grasping her arm a little roughly, "you don't feel faint, do you?"

"No, no: just stifled for a minute," answered Barbara; but as they walked on he said, rather dogmatically, that in her state of health it was little short of outrageous for her to be so much alone.

"My state of health?" cried Barbara, feeling also irritated. "There was never a healthier woman than I!"

"Indeed?" said Dering, dryly. "You won't deny, perhaps, that there have been more prudent ones?"

Barbara was silent. She felt that she could not then explain anything to him, and dragged him forward in her eagerness to be out of that shadow-striped, many-noised wood. Dering's irritation vanished as he felt the violent tremblings which swept her from time to time.

IV.

They stepped from the shelter of the woods into the teeth of a brown gale. The hills lay in overlapping wedges of gray-violet against a long ribbon of wan light, the Scotch weather-glim. The fields were a seething reach of dark-gray weeds and grasses; the sky a flapping cloak of gray, blown back from the shoulders of some invisible giantess, and the shadows on the bleached downs her footprints.

The wind blew in volumes bulging with fierce sound. It hurled Barbara and Dering against one another, and tore away her hat, next enveloped them in a sudden eddy of whirling sticks and leaves. Dering stooped his head and shouted,—

"We can't go on in this. Isn't there some big tree we can get under?"

"Yes, there is a tulip-tree at the foot of that hill," shrieked Barbara, putting her lips close to his ear.

He was conscious of her warm breath amid all that hurly.

They then struggled down-hill together, and at the bottom were confronted by a tearing stream, shaggy with foam. He was hesitating what method to pursue, when Barbara sprang forward and leaped deliberately, first in and then out of the water, which was at no place very deep. He followed, angry again.

"I never—saw—such—a—reckless—woman!" he roared. But the wind blew his words backward, and Barbara did not hear them. She ran ahead and crouched down finally among the overhanging roots of an enormous tree, and he came and seated himself beside her. Together they looked at the western sky. It was one vast, ragged confusion of cloud and glare. The naked branches of the trees along the road knotted and unknotted themselves angrily, and through them the wind slithered and hissed like a winged serpent.

"You must be bitterly cold," said Dering. "And your feet are wet, too."

"No," answered Barbara. Then she turned her face towards him with its up-blowing swirls of hair. He could make out nothing distinctly, beyond the glisten of her eyes as the strange light caught them.

"I like it," she said. "It rouses me. It stings, but it wakens."

"That is why I like it," responded Dering, briefly. "It is like drinking a witch-brew,—cold in the mouth, hot in the vitals. I wish we could be blown for a long way over those hustling tree-tops."

"Yes, I wish so. One cannot think much in such an uproar except such thoughts as it suggests."

"You mean one cannot hark backward," said Dering.

"Yes. How did you know?"

"I am beginning to feel your thoughts as they form."

"It is the wind. I am always full of electricity in a wind like this."

"I feel it. I can tell you where your hands are without looking at you."

"Where are they?"

"One over the other against your breast."

"Why, how strange!"

"You see I am different too in the wind."

"Yes, you are. We are like trees. The wind is our soul. It blows life into us. Without it we are mere vegetables."

"I can't think of you as a vegetable," said Dering, and they laughed a little. She drew nearer him; he could feel the thick stuff of her gown press against him in the blurred gloom. The wind whirled around them, like an invisible elf romping.

"Your voice sounds so strange and bodiless," said Barbara. "I can just see you."

"And I can just see you. It is the light of dreams."

"And of the places after death. You seem like a ghost."

"You talk like one," said Dering. "You are entirely different in this mood from what I thought you."

"Perhaps you thought that vividly-colored people never had gray thoughts?"

"Perhaps."

"You see that they do, though. I feel as though I had taken wine. I want to talk. I want to say many things to you. They surge up in my mind as the wind does in the woods there. Do you think me crazy?"

"No, but I feel a little crazy myself. You are like a big, flute-voiced elf-queen sitting there with only your eyes aglow. Everything has changed about you,—my ideas and all." He laughed again.

"What does it matter? Let us give each other our red-hot thoughts, not wait for them to cool to cinders in the breath of conventionality and commonplace."

"I will give you one now, then."

"What is it?"

"I like you."

"You did not like me at first, then?"

"No; I thought you ordinary."

"What has made you change your opinion?"

"Perhaps you are really an elf-queen."

"Was it not the daughters of the elf-king who were hollow and had no hearts?"

"That was because they were stuffed so full of precious thoughts that some thief stole them, and they gave their hearts away."

"Women never give away their hearts."

"What then?"

"They are torn up, like the flowers of Eastern legend, that men may find jewels at their roots."

"You are a strange woman."

"You are a strange man."

"If I were a doctor I should say you had a fever."

"I feel as though I had. See how hot my hand is, and I have my glove off."

He took her bare hand in his; their full pulses throbbed into one. She gazed at him with sparkling eyes; her lips curled corner-wise into a smile, and she drew ragged, uneven breaths. She fancied that it would be like this if she had gone to visit her husband's grave in this ghoul-light, and he had come up in his grave-clothes and sat on its edge and talked to her. But Dering's hand was not the hand of the dead. She drew hers away suddenly, and started to her feet, when a slanting blast dashed her down again beside him. Putting out his hand to draw her furs closer about her, he let it rest against her throat. She shivered, and sunk down a little from his touch.

"Barbara," he said, unsteadily, "you have played me some witch-trick. What is this I feel for you? It is gruesome, but strong. I feel as though I did not want to leave you. I hate this murky half-glimmer, and yet I would be content to sit here with you day after day, night after night, for a long time. I think my mind must be

akin to your mind. I am hungry for your thoughts. If you were Amina in the story, I think I would wait for you at the church-yard gate every night and not be afraid."

Then she began to laugh, wild, clamorous laughter, made loud or low as the wind swelled or withdrew.

"Yes, yes, yes," she said, "that is what I am,—Amina. I live on dead bodies. I am only happy when prying into a grave. Church-yards are my lurking-places. I must begin to eat rice with a bodkin."

He held her firmly, still with his hand on her throat.

"Go on," he said, after a while, in a perfectly grave voice. "I seem to understand your wild mood in some strange way. I shan't attempt to reason with you. Some day you'll tell me everything."

"Yes, everything, everything," she panted, pressing close to him. "You are good to understand. It sounds very crazy, I know."

"I think you must have suffered a great deal."

"I have! I have!" she said, sobbingly. "Oh, I wish I could tell you now!"

"You shall tell me only when you wish to. If it is now, I will listen. But I can wait as long as you choose. I am very patient."

"Yes, you must wait. I can't talk connectedly in this wind: it blows all but the dregs of my thoughts into foam."

"I am afraid, to be very prosaic, that you are taking cold. But what are we to do? Walking is impossible, for you at least, until this hurly-burly subsides."

"I notice that your slang blows away too," said Barbara, with sudden humor.

"Oh, my slang is a garment," he answered. "Whenever I go swimming in very deep waters I leave it on the bank."

"How I love to swim! It is one of the few out-of-door things I really care for."

"You must look superb with that dark-gold head of yours drenched. I should like to see you coming down a shadowy stream in this light, laughing that dirling laugh of yours, like a true water-kelpie. How the folks on the bank would screech and run!"

"I seem to suggest eerie names to you. First I am an elf-queen, then Amina, then a water-kelpie. But I do swim well. I can swim in surf. I am so strong. Feel."

"Gad! you have got a biceps!" said Dering, amazedly. "You are the most extraordinary mixture I ever knew. When you first came in that evening at Rosemary, I thought you just big and heavy: you didn't give me an idea of strength. Now you remind me of a war-goddess: your piled-up hair is like a helmet in this curious light. Look here: some day we'll go swimming together. I know the weirdest old garden in Italy; there's an enormous lake in it, lined with white marble; you can see the ripples like gold threads against the bottom on a moonlight night. I should like to see you with that water curling about you. How splendid those arms of yours would look dripping from wrist to shoulder! Ugh! what a great, golden, uncanny thing you are!"

"You must swim well yourself: don't you? A man should swim, and ride, and wrestle, and fence, as he breathes."

"I have always thought so," said Dering.

"How alike we are!"

This sentence always marks a distinct epoch in the acquaintance of a man and woman. The hands of friendship and love are drawn apart as by two passing trains, and friendship is left on the siding. These two turned their faces towards each other in the grim twilight, although they could now discern only a vague massed darkness where each was.

"Yes,—more than you know," said Dering, concisely.

"I don't see how it is: you understand me before I speak."

"And you understand me after I speak,—what is really much rarer."

The wind was now dying down. A fitful, whinnying gust occasionally shook the dry limbs above them, wailed up and down the road for a little space, fleered sullenly to leeward, and was still.

Dering rose and held out his hands to Barbara, who found herself on her feet and almost against his breast at the same time. She withdrew a little hurriedly, and the darkness fell down between them. They then groped their way stumblingly to a gate just above, and passed through together. Among the tall weeds on the comb of the hill, some stars were a-tremble like belated fireflies.

"There are your elfin maids of honor coming to find you," said Dering. "I can see the witch-fires in their caps."

"You see they don't know there is a mortal with me."

"Perhaps they mean that this mortal shall put on immortality."

"Don't!" said Barbara, shaken by one of the violent trembling fits which had alarmed him earlier in the evening. "That's in the burial-service. How can you speak lightly of such things? Oh, this has been a terrible, terrible walk!"

"Thank you," said Dering, gravely.

"Don't laugh,—don't laugh," she urged, grasping his arm with both hands. "Oh, why did you say that? I can see it all now!—that horrible, long church, like a vault itself, filled with leering, silly, curious faces,—that mouthing man in his robes,—the coffin—— Oh!"

"Barbara! Oh, you poor girl!" said Dering, with curdling pity. He put both arms about her, and she clung to him, gasping and trembling, in the desolation of night-blurred upland.

V.

Dering came to Rosemary the next day, and the next, but Barbara was not to be seen. For nearly a week she did not leave her room, and when she came down at last, drawn by the wooing of the warm November afternoon, which had in it some of the after-glow of summer, like the warmth left by young lips on those of the aged, she found Dering seated on the shallow stone steps of the old portico, playing with the greyhound pups. He put them aside as best he could, to greet her, and his eyes went deep into her eyes. He almost felt the moisture of that diving gaze; and then her lids fell, but his look remained upon her; and after a moment or so he began to think that she inspired him

with imagination, such strange fancies stirred him when in her presence. This afternoon, notably, she seemed to him, in her gray gauze gown, like one of the mist-wreaths from that strange evening on which he had last seen her, blown into this golden to-day,—a pale cloud, in shape of a woman, which some far sunset had kissed in dying, leaving its light upon her hair.

As he rose to meet her, he noticed that she shrank, and, man-like, misinterpreted the motion. He thought it was the memory of their last walk together that caused that involuntary withdrawing, when it was in fact the unmournful character of the gown that she wore,—an airy thing, held in place by an old silver girdle, and meant only for feminine eyes,—as unwidow-like a garment as can be imagined; suitable perhaps for a young girl who mourns the death of her first kiss, but nothing more material. Her bright, smooth flesh glowed through the smoky folds, like Pleasure revealing herself through dreams.

Dering felt her beauty cling to him from head to foot, like a veil whose woof was fire and whose warp mist. It thrilled and chilled him at the same time. Pale and ærial as was her dress, it was like a breath of cold air between them. He was reminded of some rich tropical flower, blooming behind the meshes of the Spanish moss.

All this passed through his mind in a whiff. His words were prosaic enough.

"I came to bring you a book," he said. "I suppose you'll laugh at me and call me Browning-mad, but I like it awfully. It's all scribbled up. I thought you were still ill, you know. I thought it might cheer you."

"No, I don't laugh at you. I like Browning. It takes courage to admit it, though: people always think one posing. It is almost as trying to acknowledge Browning as it is to acknowledge the Deity."

"Yes, isn't it? I wonder he acknowledges himself."

They laughed, Barbara with some nervousness.

"Suppose you come and sit here," said Dering, "and let us look over it together. This air will be like wine to you. I'll get that fur rug out of the drawing-room."

"Wait," said Barbara. "I am too chilly in this thin dress. While you get that I will ring for a cloak."

She rejoined him with a dark cloak dropping from her shoulders. With her Naiad-like attire hidden from sight, she felt more matronly and at her ease. He was really a boy to her, just her age within a week or two. She had heard of his every school and college escapade from her husband, and actually knew the names of two of his salad-day flames. She smiled at him in a distinctly motherly way, as he seated himself beside her on the rug with those nestling movements which always amused her.

"I like you when you look like that," he said, pleasedly. "You've got an air of The Mother of Nations. Do you know you're a good bit like the Milo?"

"How very absurd!" said Barbara, but glowed with the inward satisfaction which always possesses flesh and blood on hearing itself compared to marble.

"Yes, you do. I used to think the Milo a big, lumpy woman; but she's the embodiment of grandeur to me now."

"I believe you thought me a big, lumpy woman at first?"

"Not lumpy,—only too big. See here: I've got an odd trick of opening books at random: I'm going to open this for you before we begin reading. Now——"

She was interested, and leaned her head close to his over the opening book. His curls seemed to spring against her hair with a certain life of their own. She drew back, noticing it.

"What's the matter?" said Dering.

"Your hair,—it seemed to move."

"Did it? I don't blame it. Look, this is for you:

"God, that created all things, can renew!
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
Reward from——"

"Stop!" said Barbara. She put her open hand on the page, shutting out the words, and he glanced up wondering, to see that she was strangely pale,—not a vestige of color in lip or cheek. Under the bright up-springing of her strong hair, her face had the whiteness of a dove's wing against a flame-brown cloud.

"What's the matter?" he said, again.

"I don't like that sort of thing. It's ghastly. Please don't do anything like that ever again. I—I loathe the supernatural. I don't believe in it, of course, but I loathe it."

"I'm glad you think me supernatural. I'm beginning to think you are. At least if you're not supernatural you're superwomanly. I never saw any one an atom like you. I wish you'd kindly tell me where I made a mis-cue that time?"

"Ah! your slang-garment. So you don't feel yourself swimming in deep waters this afternoon?"

"No,—only wading. It's deepish, though. I will soon take refuge in naked English. I wish you'd tell me what's supernatural in opening a book at random? If it hits, I call it a coincidence. I don't see how that could possibly have hit, I must say. I thought it decidedly a-gley. Was there any meaning in it? There must have been, to work you up so."

"Yes, there was," said Barbara, and again the blood rushed from her face. Dering looked at her rather curiously for a few seconds, and then held out the book.

"You open for me," he said.

"I told you I disliked the idea,"—then, with sudden contradiction, "I've done some wonderful things in that way myself."

"Why, do you open books too? We *are* alike, by Jove!"

"Yes, I open the Bible sometimes; but that's an old Methodist trick."

"Do open this now. I've a reason."

Barbara took the book from him into her gloveless hands, which

were long, and slenderly firm, with perfectly-kept nails dashed here and there by little white flecks. Their touch lingered on the mental sense, as rare music does on the mental ear, being full of swift, tingling pulses, warm and elastic as some fruit,—a man's touch to a woman,—not quite human to a man. The hands of certain women are more subtly sweet of contact than the lips of others, and their very hair seems to breathe.

She hesitated, opened the book hastily with her face averted, and thrust rather than held it out to him.

"Shall I read what your finger marks?" said Dering.

"Yes."

"Just that one line?"

"Yes. It's probably something too deep for any one but Truth to dip up in her bucket."

"No, it isn't: it's Truth herself."

"Let me see."

They bent together again, then drew apart, but holding each other with varying eyes. The line ran,—

"I would love infinitely and be loved."

He leaned forward after a while, pulled a blade of grass, and marked the place with it.

"It's awfully curious," he then said, tossing back on his folded arms among the gray fur,—*"most amazingly curious. I've just been passing through a phase of my life,—which has been anything but an orthodox one, by the way,—and last night I came to that conclusion. I think I would rather love infinitely, even without being loved, than not love at all. I'm not a bit sentimental, I do assure you!"* he supplemented, hastily, springing erect all at once. Her gravely laughing eyes reassured him.

"I never take remarks personally," she said; then, with a change of mental position as swift as had been his physical one, "Don't want to love!" she cried, leaning to him; "don't wish for it! I used to; I used to pray for it every night. Oh, it sounds heroic, and superb, and godlike, to say that you are willing to take sorrow along with love,—grief in proportion to it. You would not, when the time came!—you would not! If we live we suffer. We had better be the coals of hell than the people they burn. And yet coals can't love, you know. Oh! I don't know what I'm saying!" She got to her feet and ran down the old steps, out into the dappled twilight.

Dering followed her. "Look here," he said: "you needn't ever be afraid I'll misunderstand you. It would be absolutely impossible,—absolutely. Go on and talk just as crazily as ever you please. We're all crazy,—every one of us,—and the very craziest of all is the man who says he isn't."

"But don't want to love," repeated Barbara. "It isn't a romantic girl talking to you. I am a woman of twenty-six, and I know,—I know it all. Whenever I think of it,—whenever I lie awake at night and think of the whole weary thing, from first to last,—I am so grate-

ful, grateful, grateful that I never had a child. I used to long for one. Now I am so glad!—so glad! I have gotten up on bitter, winter nights in my thin night-gown, trembling all over with the cold, to thank God for that! At least I haven't that to answer for!"

"I know so well how you feel," said John Dering, gravely.

"Most women are never happy until they have a child, you know," she panted on; "and at first, at first I did long for something to remind—something that belonged—— Yes, yes, I did want a child of my very own; but now I tell you I can't thank God enough——"

She paused, expecting some words of remonstrance, and he said, in a voice which was as different as possible from his usual boyish tone,—

"If I were a woman I should feel just as you do."

"Oh, how good you are!—how you understand!" she cried, passionately, and reached him both her hands. He took them in his own strong, nervous young hands, which moved incessantly even while holding hers, and waited as if for her to go on.

"You are so good," she said, again.

"Why do women always persist in calling men good when they understand them? I honestly believe if Satan were to let a woman see, while she was roasting, that he comprehended her sufferings, she would say, 'How good you are!'"

"But you are good: no man who was not would listen so patiently and not sneer. I don't mean that you've never done anything wrong——"

"I hope not!"

"Nor ever will again——"

"Heaven forbid!"

"But you understand me."

"One has to be a bit good to do that," he put in, quickly and somewhat shyly. She moved impulsively towards him.

"I am so glad you like me!" she said. "It isn't quite so dreadful since you have come."

"You dear thing!"

"No, it isn't,—it isn't. Do you know I can remember when I used to like to be alone? As a girl I liked it. Ugh! how we change! how we change!"

"Yes, we do," said Dering, feelingly.

"Will you stay to tea to-night? We can have it all to ourselves in the drawing-room, before that big fire. Aunt Fridis always sits in the library. I make such good tea. We can have the dogs in. It will be quite bright and cheerful, won't it? I think we'd enjoy a long talk over the fire. A wood fire always thaws my thoughts. We could roast some chestnuts, too."

"Nothing personal in that, I trust?"

"What do you mean? Oh! that disgusting slang! Never mind: you can say anything if you'll stay. But you will stay, won't you? Are you fond of music? I play very well,—really well, you know. Oh! I forgot there's no piano. Well, never mind: we can talk. Every time we talk together I feel I know you ten years better." She

was hurrying on eagerly, feverishly, glancing every now and then over one shoulder or the other as at some haunting presence.

"I tell you what I'm going to do," said Dering, suddenly. "I'm going to make you come in the house this instant, and then you're to go up-stairs and put on something warm,—a tea-gown, if you have one. You are shivering all over, down to your finger-ends. And then you're to pull up to that big fire you spoke of and let me amuse you: that's what you're to do."

"Oh, how like Val!" she said, under her breath; "how like him!"

Dering turned a little sharply.

"What was that?" he said. "I didn't quite catch it, you speak so fast."

"Nothing," she assured him.

As they mounted the portico steps together he turned to her. "It has just come to me what you said, and I don't want you to mislead yourself. I'm not really in the least like my cousin; that is, except as far as looks go."

She caught at his arm to steady herself, and her tempestuous breathing frightened him a little.

"There," he said, "I'm a brute. If he was Valentine I'm certainly Orson." And he smiled with a grim humor.

"No, no, you're not," whispered Barbara. "Only you have yet to suffer."

"I don't know but what I have," said Dering, somewhat gloomily. And then she let him guide her into the dark drawing-room and unfasten her cloak.

VI.

As Barbara was about to leave the room, Dering came and put himself in her way.

"I wonder if you would think me insufferably cheeky if I were to ask you something?" he said, with a suggestion of embarrassment.

"I should say that it depended a good deal upon the something."

"Well, then, would you mind putting on a white gown?—that is, of course, if you change your gown. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind? Mind putting on a white gown, or mind your asking me to?"

"Either,—both."

"Not in the least."

"You *are* a dear thing!"

He reached out his hand impulsively, she placed hers in it, and they both laughed. She came back after a while, feeling rather too big in her loose gown of white China crape.

"I feel something as I fancy a statue does, when it is suddenly done into marble after having been in the clay for a long while. I feel aggressively white; and there is so much of me to put in white."

"Oh, well, there's a good deal of the Milo," said Dering.

"Yes, but even she dispensed with her arms."

They laughed again, Barbara afterwards sitting silent for some

time, and flinging at the little silver bells which ornamented her hand-screen. They were both looking in the fire, but Dering could see her from the side of his eye, and wondered how he could ever have thought her too big. It was like cavilling at the size of a flowering tree, he told himself. In reality Barbara would have been handsomer had there been less of her and her good looks thus more concentrated. As we grow older, we like our creeds and slippers larger, our clubs and houris smaller.

Barbara was not in any way conscious of Dering, as she struck at the fringe of bells: she was merely thinking how sad and pitiful a thing it was that she would never again care what sort of garments she wore, so long as they covered her and attested that she was in her right mind. She could not imagine taking any interest in her attire. When a woman neglects her wardrobe, it is as when a man loses his interest in his cook. Like the proverbial straw, although of infinitesimal importance in itself, either fact will tell which way the wind of destiny is blowing. When the wardrobe and the cook flourish, then for the coast of joy: if they are overlooked, then for the islands of disillusion or sorrow. A woman's hair, however, is the final test. As long as she curls it she cannot be truly said to have resigned either soul or body to despair. Let the accustomed and becoming ringlets be brushed austere back from brow and temples, then in truth is consolation an exile. Barbara's rich love-locks were yet curled above her straight brows.

If you had asked her, she would undoubtedly have replied that life to her was a burden to be borne, cheerfully or resignedly as the case might be. She would have smiled at any suggestion of future joy, as surely as she would have frowned to think that any one could deem her capable of ever again desiring earthly felicity. She would have told you that, to her, existence meant resignation and religion a great patience. Yet, strange as it may seem, beneath all this weight of gathered and dried twigs from the tree of a very sorrowful knowledge, a tiny Hope rustled its yet incapable wings. It was too small and just-born a thing to be conscious even of its own personality, much less to make Barbara acquainted with that fact. She perhaps felt the tickling now and then of its half-fledged pinions, but this sensation disturbed rather than pleased.

Dering, who was much in love with her already, was congratulating himself that at last he had found a woman, young, handsome, and intelligent, who would sincerely give and receive, the highest order of friendship. An old councillor had once said to him, "Young man, if you want a friend in a young woman, choose one who has had some great sorrow." Barbara had been the possessor of this required item; she, moreover, corresponded marvellously to his rather exalted ideal of womanhood. Among many future delights which he pictured as attendant upon their communion of soul, that of the letters which they would exchange was predominant. What charming letters he felt sure that she would write!—as easy and unconventional as the lines of the delightful garment which she now wore. What delicate humor would characterize them! what a subtle play of fancy! what quips and

quirks of lighter moods! He could fancy those long, gracile fingers moving over the thin, white sheets which she would send him, the five rubies above her wedding-ring winking impishly from her other hand used to steady the paper. He seemed to follow these graceful hands from wrist to shoulder, from shoulder to throat; her bending face, illuminated by the white reflection from the paper, grew also on his sight. She would, perhaps, wear that dense yet filmy gown; in the privacy of her own apartment, she would have unbound the riotous masses of her copper-colored hair; her delicate foot in its web-like stocking would be thrust in and out of her pretty bedroom slipper as thoughts and fancies crowded on her; she would doubtless have tossed other discarded garments on some chair in that charming room; the peeps of delicate lace from crumpled petticoats would be enchanting. She would——

"A penny," said Barbara,—“two,—three,—even four. Your thoughts were so tremendous that you were literally glowering.”

"I'm sure I couldn't have been glowering," said Dering.

"That leaves me to infer that they were pleasant thoughts."

"So they were."

"Oh! then I can have no hope of purchasing them. It is only disagreeable thoughts that are purchasable. How the wind blows!"

"Yes: it seems the signal for it to wake when we are together."

"I am so glad you stayed! but I'm afraid your walk home will be very dreary."

"I will have those unsold thoughts."

"Cannot you give me some, even if you will not sell them?"

"Why, yes, I will. I was thinking what congenial friends we two are going to be. I was thinking what delightful letters you could write. I dare say you think me very presuming. Do you?"

"No," said Barbara. She let the hand-screen fall with a little tinkle into her lap, and held up her laced fingers between the flames and her eyes.

"No," she said again, seriously, turning him her full face. "I do not see how you could even say that (because I'm sure you don't think it), after the way I've talked to you."

"If I had any doubts," replied Dering, "they are gone now."

"I am sure of it. I don't feel as though we would ever have a misunderstanding."

"Nor I."

"I do not see why people should ever quarrel. There are always stones in any road, but a skilful driver avoids them. This very road of friendship, one can either jolt over it or be whisked smoothly along,—counting idiosyncrasies as stones, of course."

"You must have been as strange a child as you are a woman," said Dering.

"I don't know," said Barbara. "All children are more or less strange, only grown people don't take the trouble to find it out. Childhood is rarely ever commonplace. Every child has at some time one thought original and startling enough to make its acquaintance a benefit. I remember once a child telling me that she thought 'hio-

coughs must be prayers to the devil.' Did you ever hear of such an extraordinary idea?"

She had been hurrying on, partly from real interest in her subject, partly from a desire to be saying something.

Dering's absent-minded length of gaze gave her a slightly uncomfortable feeling. She was almost used now to his resemblance to her husband, and the dissimilarity of his spiritual self was beginning to impress her.

"I don't believe there ever was a woman the least like you," he said, finally, withdrawing his look.

"Oh," returned Barbara, "every man says that to every woman whom he particularly likes. It is the same thing as telling one's sweetheart that she is the only woman who ever really roused one's whole nature, or that no man ever loved quite as one loves her,—etc., etc., etc."

She rose and began to move up and down the room with the long, padding gait peculiar to her.

"You move like a panther," said Dering. "I can't keep my eyes off you."

"So I see," she answered, laughing somewhat nervously, and made as though she would sink into a chair.

"No, don't," he pleaded. "Do move about. I can feel how restless you are. When you walk with that crouching, suppressed pace, I can almost hear the jungle-grasses crackle back from your way. You do change so! Out in that wind you were like a witch thing,—uncanny,—all eyes and a blowse of red-gold hair. Then when I meet you sometimes walking, you are like a merry boy. Then you are like a shadow-woman: you were this afternoon in that thinnish gray gown. When you speak of Val you are like a beautiful, forlorn Peri. There! you have changed again,—in a second! I never saw anything like it!"

She held out her clasped hands to him, as he rose and approached her.

"Please do not speak of—him," she said, in a strained undertone. "Please do not,—ever again."

Dering paused where he was, and did not come any nearer her.

"I promise you," he said. "I will not."

VII.

Barbara had by this time become quite accustomed to the fact of Dering's resemblance to her husband. True, an occasional trick of voice or gesture would arrest her with a sense of pained cognizance, but she was beginning to connect his personality also with himself, and these characteristic traits, having a twofold association, wounded her less and less. They were together more frequently and for a longer time as the days fled backward, and it became his regular custom to spend the evening at Rosemary. They were both bewitched by that sense of unworldliness which possesses men and women of the world when alone together in the country, and it seemed to them as though

they could never voluntarily have mured themselves in labyrinths of brick and stone during these late autumn days, now discovered to be the most desirable of all the year.

It was on a bitterly cold, gray afternoon in November that these two comrades, as they now called themselves, were engaged in a game of "graces" in the large central hall at Rosemary. The earlier day had been tempestuous and clattering with wind-whirled sleet, but a tawny cloud, that in streaming wildness resembled, perhaps, the flying mane of one of the Prophet's fiery steeds when in mid-heaven, now streaked all the upper sky and sent a gold-red light glowing in at the hall windows. There were eight of these, tall, shrouded shapes, like uncased mummies, and where the faces should have been, that furnace-like radiance shone through folds of sheer muslin.

The figures of Barbara and Dering were revealed as by a gilded mist, while they swooped with elastic movements among the shadows, here and there, which glittered as with mica. Now the rathe arm and throat of Barbara came into bright relief against the dusky formlessness, now it was Dering's gay crest of curls and straining shoulders. The orange-ribboned hoops circled above, like two haloes uncertain as to which of those handsome heads they were to saint.

Barbara suddenly caught one of the bright rings on her arm and let it run up to her shoulder.

"You are not tired?" said Dering.

"Only of this especial amusement. Look! you cannot catch that before I do!" She sent the grace-hoop spinning down the long hall as she spoke, and leaped out after it. Dering was almost as quick. They met hustledly in the gloom at the farther end of the house, and both seized the hoop at once.

"I touched it first!" said Barbara.

"No, I!" declared Dering.

"Indeed, indeed I did!" persisted she.

"Indeed, indeed you didn't!" he returned, mockingly.

"I will have it, at all events, said Barbara.

"Oh, if you want to tussle——" replied Dering.

Of all delightful autumnal experiences, a romp in a big country hall towards twilight is the most exhilarating. Barbara and Dering wrangled like a boy and a girl over the grace-hoop. She was as evasive in her sudden dives and twistings as a dream-woman. Their breath came hurriedly, and they began to pant and laugh together. Dering was almost winning, when some small object tinkling on the bare floor attracted their attention. Barbara suddenly released the grace-hoop and rushed forward.

"You are welcome to your prize!" she called, pausing under one of the windows to examine her find. "I have often longed to see what you have in this locket. Now I will punish you for cheating. I will find out who your sweetheart is, and I will never again give you any peace!"

"Jove!" said Dering, "was that my locket? Come, Barbara, honestly,—don't look at that, please; I really ask you."

Barbara's reply was to press a little nearer the window, and curl

her lips inward in her effort to separate the close rims of the small gold case in her hands. Dering came up behind her, and unceremoniously took both hands and locket into a tight grasp. This locket contained nothing more sentimental than an absurd photograph of Valentine Pomfret, taken when the two were at college together,—one of those deformed caricatures which one sometimes sees, and which consist of a Brobdingnagian head on a Liliputian body. Dering, by this time, knew enough of Barbara's morbid sensitiveness to dread the effect which the sudden sight of this photograph might have upon her.

"I tell you I'm not joking," he said.

"Nor I. There's no use trying to bully me. You know I'm nearly as strong as you are. If you want another tow-row, all right."

This time the scuffle was wordless and somewhat earnest.

"I don't want to hurt you," said Dering, finally.

"Don't alarm yourself. I'll stand any amount of mangling to gain my end."

"You know I seriously mean to get that from you."

"So do I to see it."

"I simply can't hurt you," said Dering, a little desperately, "but I must have it. Why won't you see I am in earnest?"

"Why won't you see I am?"

"But such an ado over a little thing!"

"That's what I've been thinking."

"Barbara——"

"It is my name."

"I give you your last chance. It's an antique resort, but if you don't give me that locket I'll—I'll kiss you!"

"What a truly terrible threat!"

"You don't believe it; but I will, I tell you. I should think you might see that I've some real reason for not wishing you to see that locket."

"How deeply penetrating men are! As if that were not the very reason that I wanted to see it!"

"You understand, then, that I really mean to kiss you if you don't give it up? Really I do."

"Do you?" said Barbara. She escaped him by a sudden flashing movement, and rushed down the now almost absolutely dark hall, impelled by that delightful feeling of scared uncertainty which precipitates children down a long staircase, past darkling coignes where clutched fingers are waiting to grasp a loitering ankle.

She dashed into the as yet lampless dining-room, doubled through a little corridor, and rushed back on her own traces, laughing gaspingly to think how she had escaped him. As she darted through another door back into the dining-room, she found herself almost in Dering's arms. Even then, however, he did not secure her: she escaped once more, and fled into a dark little closet to the left, mistaking it, alas! in her excitement, for a corresponding door of exit. Dering followed her at once. She gave a kind of laughing cry, like a hysterical child, and flattened herself against the wall, thrusting the locket behind her; but, catching her about the waist, he drew her forward, feeling for the

locket with his other hand. He might as well have tried to open a boy's fist. She bent from him, and made, this time, an altogether ineffectual attempt to get away. Dering, rather out of patience, stooped down; she turned her head, a little frightened, and her lips brushed his,—a touch light as flower-leaves, fine as fire. In another instant both mouths had clung into a kiss.

A great mental blow annihilates memory, just as it is annihilated by a great physical blow. Neither Barbara nor Dering recalled how they came to be grouped before the dining-room fire, he leaning back in a low arm-chair, she crouching with her hand-hidden face against his knee. All about them was a winter silence, broken only by the ticking of Dering's watch and Barbara's long-drawn, sobbing breaths. It seemed to him as though cold rills of wind were playing up and down his limbs, while the chair in which he sat, together with himself and Barbara, rose towards the ceiling, leaving the floor at a great distance beneath. He looked far into the hot core of the fire, thence down at the smooth curve of the head of his cousin's wife, thinking how like were its shining strands of hair to the threads on a reel of silk, and grasping more firmly the handles of the chair in which he sat, in order to refrain from touching that winning lustre with his finger-ends.

Barbara's breath returned upon her face from the cloth of Dering's trousers. She saw the fire-red in blurred lines between her fingers, and put some meaningless words to the ticking of his watch, fantastically likening it to an echo of his heart, which rapped hurriedly above. She seemed to see through the top of her head his set face, unusual in its fierce pallor, and with eyes gleaming as she had remembered them for that instant when they had flashed into hers over that eager kiss. The fire seemed a conscious presence to her, and its flames appeared to leap and cognizantly peer between her hiding fingers, until she felt almost as though inquisitive eyes were upon her. It was certain that she thought of everything but her present situation. She was kneeling upon a wrinkle in the hearth-rug, and, feeling that it chafed her knees, was reminded of the Persian prayer-rugs, and so of the desert, and so of the dreary possibilities which would be included for a woman during a prolonged ride on camel-back. She wondered if Dering had ever mounted upon one of those picturesquely-distorted beasts, and was inclined to laugh when she found that she had forgotten whether it was in one of their many stomachs or in their humps that they carried the supply of water which prevented them from suffering of thirst on their long journeys.

Dering, in the mean while, became also the victim of a profound and ghastly desire to laugh. The corners of his mouth twisted eyeward in a mirthless and distorted grin which would have inexpressibly horrified Barbara had she chanced at that moment to glance up. He controlled this risible phenomenon by a violent effort, however, and resumed his grim stare into the fire, venturing after a while to pass a somewhat uncertain hand over her bending head.

"No, no," whispered Barbara.

"I beg your pardon," he said, earnestly. "I won't touch you again. I only want to do what you wish."

She murmured something which he had to bend down to hear, and even then did not quite catch.

"It shall be just as you say," he remarked, at a venture.

"You are so good," she whispered back.

"But what must I do? I leave it all to you. Must I go away? I'll go abroad, if you wish it. I'll—I'll go to India: I've always wanted to go to India. I'll send you some tiger-skins—um—that's too commonplace, eh? What was it Isaacs sent his sweetheart? Tiger-ears, wasn't it? I'll send you some tiger-ears."

"How can you joke about it?" cried Barbara.

"I really don't know," replied Dering, sorrowfully. "Reaction, I suppose."

"Oh, it's all so dreadful!—so dreadful!" came the smothered tones from his knees.

"No, I won't agree to that," he answered, firmly.

"Oh, but you must. It's the least that we can do."

"What is? to think it all dreadful?"

"Yes, all of it,—*all*."

"Well, I just simply can't. It may be a want of refinement, or a high feeling,—I suppose one could find lots of names for it,—but I honestly can't feel that, you know."

"Oh," said Barbara, "I'm sure you will. When you are by yourself,—in the dark,—quite alone,—you—you will see how awful it has all been from first to last."

"No," returned Dering, "I know I won't. You had better make up your mind to that. If you're disappointed in me, it's no more than I am in myself."

"And me," said Barbara.

"In you? *Darling!*" he breathed, tearing the fringe on the rather rickety old chair which held him, in the effort not again to touch her. "How can you say such things to me?"

"Oh, I haven't said one-third that I ought,—that I mean to. You *must* be disappointed in me: you cannot help it. It's—it's almost a duty; yes, it's a sacred duty. Disappointed in me! you must *despise* me!"

"That's utter nonsense!" said Dering, in a matter-of-fact tone, which sounded as incongruously among the wailing harmonies of her self-reproachful voice as would a penny trumpet among the andante ripples of the Moonlight Sonata.

"I'm glad you can look on it in that way," answered Barbara, stiffly,—if one can be said to do anything stiffly when one is limply huddled against another's knee. "Yes, I—I am really glad of that," she added, with less certainty.

"Why, of course it's nonsense," said Dering, stoutly. "When *you* are alone in the dark *you* will see that." All at once he succumbed to a sudden, sweeping passion. "'Alone in the dark,'" he repeated, leaning down his arms heavily upon her, and gathering the rich folds of her gown in his hands. "Barbara, you need never be that again."

"What?" she said, huskily, longing to hear the words she knew he would utter in reply, and yet loathing herself for so longing. "What?"

"Alone in the dark," said Dering, tensely; and she felt his quick breath glow among the fibres of her hair as his lips brushed them in speaking. She cringed shivering beside him a moment longer, and then got to her feet and hurried away from him to a distant chair. When he followed her and bent over her, she shrunk down from him, putting up her open hands between them.

"It is what I must be forever," she whispered, shakenly,—*"always, —always, —always!"*

"No," said Dering. He took her protesting hands in his, and laid his lips first to one palm and then to the other.

"I tell you yes!" she said, passionately, her stormy bosom tossing some little diamond pins that she wore into iridescent sparkles,—*"yes, and yes, and yes!"*

Then she took his face into both hands for an instant, and held it near her own.

"We are both mad, I think," she said.

"Mad if we persist in calling simple joy madness."

"I have no right to joy."

"But I have. Will you deny me that right?"

"If it must come through me, yes."

"It must come through you, and I say no."

"We are both very obstinate," she said, in a tired voice.

"There you are perfectly correct," answered Dering.

"But I will conquer."

"There you are entirely wrong."

"Yes, wrong in everything. There *you* are right. Oh, do you suppose I do not suffer?" she cried, with sudden bitterness. "I have no words to tell you what I suffer."

"Nor I," he said.

She rose, and stood for an instant unyielding in his embrace.

"You are a man," was her final reply. "You have not the complex feelings that tear a woman. And you are responsible only to yourself. You have never—" she paused a moment, looking at him,—*"you have never been married. You do not know what it is to hear a dead voice ever in your ears, to feel always a dead hand claiming you. You do not know what it is to sin against the dead. The dead,"* she repeated, glancing dreadfully about her.

"Barbara!" said Dering; but she escaped him.

She rushed from him towards the half-open door, her stretched-forth arms repulsing him as he advanced.

"No, no! never!" she whispered. "There is a grave between us,—there is an open grave between us."

VIII.

Dering did not seem to himself to walk back to the house at which he was stopping. He had that sensation of gliding along without volition, a foot or two above the ground, which we have all experienced in dreams, and his down-bent eyes were not conscious of the dreary glisten that the winter moon struck from the wet, dead leaves

about his feet. There was of course no fire in his room when he reached it, and the cold was intense; but he undressed in the same species of stupor, only rousing for a moment when in trying to brush out his thick curls he discovered that the water into which he had plunged them had frozen. He then managed to kindle a small fire with some bits of light-wood and an old sporting gazette, kneeling down before the brief blaze, his discarded coat held by the sleeves, about his neck in lieu of a dressing-gown. It was slow work, thawing that thick mass of heavily-curling locks, and he threw on more wood, still retaining his crouching posture. As the heat increased, he was conscious of an elusive, subtle perfume, which escaped and returned as will a remembered face; and all at once he became aware of its origin. It was that exquisitely fresh fragrance which sponges and some women share in common,—a smell of wild grasses and the sea,—of a woman's hair daily washed,—in a word, of Barbara. For the few moments in which he had held her in his arms, her head had leaned against his breast. It was this delicate perfume of her hair which the fire was now drawing from the cloth of his coat.

He rose and plunged into bed, giving a great, boyish shudder as the cold sheets settled down about him. His coat he had thrown from him, and he lay watching it now where it sprawled in a dark heap near the fire-lit hearth. He longed to experience again that faint, intoxicating odor, but something withheld him: it was like retaining some spiritual portion of her against her will, and Dering's pride was only exceeded by his honesty. He was bewildered as yet, and could form no distinct idea of his position in regard to her, though of one thing he was sure,—namely, that he had no right to think of her as a lover of his lady. Her morbid insistence about the dead had not at all affected him, but she had repulsed his embrace, not yielded to it, and he would not in imagination take into his arms a woman who in reality refused to remain within them. He was a man of few but thorough creeds, and chief of these was a belief, consistently carried out, which ran to the effect that a man's thoughts should be as respectful to a chaste woman as were his actions. He knew the power of perfume over the fancy, and he knew that self-control consists chiefly in retaining the bolt in its braces, not in slipping it out and then thrusting one's arm in its place. He lay quite still, shivering violently and endeavoring to fix his mind on commonplace things. It occurred suddenly to him that he had not said his prayers, which he did with the same sweet, clean, boyish regularity with which he plunged daily into cold water. These prayers varied. They were sometimes very long, sometimes merely a word or two,—never prearranged, and having reference to anything that might come into his head: thus, for several nights past he had included an ailing Irish setter in his petitions. He was a being of vast and warm affections, and sometimes asked happiness for those whom he most loved, taking a certain pleasure in whispering their names into his locked palms. To-night his orisons ran as follows: "Dear God, make Jock a good boy, and bless my father and mother, and everybody. Amen." Then he jumped into bed again, unconscious that he had repeated the very words of his child-

hood prayers, and seeing Barbara's face advance and retreat on the waves of darkness, like a sea-tossed flower. He thrust out his arms with a fierce, vehement gesture towards it, shutting his teeth until there was a sharp ringing in his ears, and whispering imperiously behind them, "Love me,—*love me.*"

Barbara, in the mean while, had also undressed mechanically; that is, she had cast aside her gown, and unloosened her ridgy hair, letting the hair-pins fall one by one upon the carpet as she took them out. Then she drew the glittering lengths together with both hands, and stood staring at her reflection in the glass. Presently a strange smile broke the stillness of her face.

"Um—we know each other," she said, addressing her mirrored self,—"we know each other, you and I, but only we two. You really have a good face,—yes, really a good face,—yes, a pure face. It's pure, I say. Look at your eyes,—such a clear, dark brown,—honest, deep, truthful,—real dog-eyes. And then your mouth's very fine,—such little, deep, cool, high-bred corners. I like to look at you; yes, you're very nice to look at, my good girl. Um—you smile so complacently, I don't think I'll pay you any more compliments. I think I will tell you what you really are,—what I see behind all that,—what your—husband sees! Oh, I know your name. You are called Barbara Pomfret,—Barbara Pomfret,—Barbara Pomfret. Your husband's name was Valentine Pomfret. You married Valentine Pomfret. He is dead, but his name is not dead: it is alive in you. Your name is Barbara Pomfret." She leaned forward here until her breath made a little triangular blur on the clear glass. "There's another name for you, too," she said. "It is—Wanton!" The word seemed to stab her as though some one else had uttered it.

"O God!" she cried, falling to her knees, "help me! Dear God, help me! Hold me. Let him come to me, just a minute,—just a minute: I'll pay for it in any way; I'll be so patient afterwards. Val, Val, come! Be disobedient, be blasphemous, be anything; only come to me one instant. You needn't even speak. Just let me see you,—you, your very self.

"Oh! oh! I forgot! He would curse me; he would ask you to curse me. I have desecrated myself. Oh, if that kiss had only burned off my lips! Oh, can't I die? Won't you let me die? Won't you let me die? Ah, let me die! You won't hear! If there was only some one to ask for me,—some one you loved. Oh, if Christ's mother asks you, won't you hear her? Dear Mother of Christ, pray for me,—plead for me! You have been a woman,—a woman like me!—like me!"

She fell upon the floor and writhed and sobbed until the boards vibrated beneath her agonized movements. Her feverish breath enveloped her face in a steam from her tear-drenched hair, as it had once before enveloped it that evening, and her face and lips were smarting and scalded by the hot drops ever gushing. In the midst of all this torture, she put out one of her burning hands and began to stroke her own half-bare shoulders, with soothing, gentle movements.

"Oh, you poor thing," she sobbed, strangling, "if I could only

comfort you!—if one could only comfort one's self!" And then the horrible silent convulsions of despair and grief renewed themselves.

It was not until a full hour had passed that she rose, or made any effort to compose herself. At the length of that time, however, she kneeled up, and began gathering her soaked and tangled hair from about her face, to which a net-work of bright strands clung moistly. Her under lip was drawn against her teeth every now and then by a struggling breath, heavy with tears as a gust of summer wind with thick rain. These shuddering breaths recurred at regular intervals, and were as though she were trying to force herself to swallow some noxious draught, while her throat ached as though she had been guillotined and was conscious of the wound. She got to her feet finally, swerved a moment, and stood erect, looking about her with a just-born resolve; then she moved to the fire, which had glowered down in crimson rifts among a crust of white wood-ashes, and spread out her hands to its glow, at the same time looking up to the shadowy ceiling. Her wretched face, glazed with tears, borrowed color from the rich coals, so that as she kneeled, staring upward, with large, distended eyes, she seemed like the Priestess of Fever presiding over her altar-fires.

It was only a few moments, however, before she rose again, and passed from the warm room out into the dark and draughty hall without, where the watery moonlight fell in oblong shapes upon the floor of waxed oak. This bleak and waning light only served to confuse her, and, shutting her eyes, she felt her way with extended hands, until her palms came in contact with the carving on a chest to one side. Opening this chest, she filled her arms with some soft draperies, and returned to her room, locking the door after her. She lighted the small silver Pompeian lamp that swung from the canopy-rail of her bed, and this wan radiance fell down in languid uncertainty upon the kneeling woman, and the mass of crushed white satin and lace with which her arms were filled. This mass she extended upon the silken coverlet, touching its folds into place with a soft and gentle reverence, and spreading above it the veil of delicate tulle. She then took from her throat the gold miniature-case which contained her husband's likeness, and, opening it, laid it down upon the sheening folds before her. Next she deliberately drew off her fur-lined dressing-gown and slippers.

The fire was now a mere pale blur here and there in the dark chimney-place, and a cold, bitter and intense, pervaded the room, while outside the wind rose a little and then dropped abruptly like a thing too heavy for its wings.

In the strong draught which passed from one loosely-hung door to the other, the silver lamp swung to and fro, changing the shadows in the satin folds underneath, and seeming to strike sparks from Barbara's bending head.

All night she kneeled there, clad only in her night-dress of thin cambric. The dreary winter sounds outside seemed not to disturb her. Now one heard the clash of ice-coated twigs in the fitful gusts, now the crisp sound of some hooved thing as it broke through the frost-rime matting the dead grass. Now a shutter clapped forward and then back again, startling the house-dog to dismal barkings, or an owl

screamed its desolate tremolo, first close at hand, then flying farther off, as though to imitate an echo.

IX.

A whole week passed before he saw her again, and then it was only by accident. He had walked over to Rosemary as usual, and, on being told of Barbara's absence, had decided to strike out across the fields on his homeward way, rather than take that monotonous tramp along the frost-roughened roads. As he swung himself over the low gray fence at the back of the stables into the brown and neglected field beyond, he felt as though he were becoming part of some cleverly-executed water-color. The sweeps of ragged hill-side, undefined and vaguely dark in the winter twilight, seemed as though roughly washed in sepia, and their tall weeds bristled at top against a wall of clear, chrome yellow ribbed with scarlet.

The broad backs of some huddling sheep caught here and there a faded reflection, and the hurried tinkling of the bell on the neck of a homeward-driven cow broke the cold stillness. At the bottom of the field an ice-coated brook pursued its sluggish way, and Dering paused to break off some slivers of the ice and transfer them to his mouth, a boyish trick which he could never resist. As he stood erect, after accomplishing this somewhat slippery feat, he saw a tall figure about ten yards farther off, on the opposite side of the stream, motionless, beside a half-burned brush fire. The pale smoke-spiral curled slowly up beyond, seeming to encircle her in its mystic whorl.

In an instant he was beside her and had her hands in his. She caught her breath sharply, but made no exclamation, and they stood searching each other's faces in the feathery light.

He spoke first, excited and breathless: "You—you? Why have you tried to hide from me? You cannot: it is useless. You see?" And he drew her towards him as he spoke; but she was as rigid and unyielding as a figure of iron: in truth her heavy black garments, seen in this reddish-gray light, resembled draperies of that sombre metal.

"Let my hands go! let my hands go!" she said to him.

For answer he lifted first one and then the other to his lips. She felt their warm clinging through her thick gloves, but this rich sensation only served to fix her in her austere determination.

"I will not," she said; and, drawing herself haughtily away to the whole length of her long arms, she repeated, in a tone which she had caught from him, and behind her closed teeth, "*I will not.*"

"Words,—words,—words," said Dering.

He released her hands, took her in his arms, and crushed her to him by main force.

"You see?" he said, again.

"That is nothing. It is nothing, I tell you. You are a man, and your body is stronger than mine; but your will is not; no, your will is not."

"You think so?" whispered Dering, with his lips against her ear. His breath streamed down her cheeks in among the black furs at her throat, thrilling her to the quick, and she began to pant frantically.

"You are cruel," she said, repulsing him as best she could. "All men are cruel. You are like the rest. You are cruel."

"No," replied Dering, "it is not I who am cruel. It is you. You are cruel to yourself."

"I want to be! I want to be!"

"You are cruel to yourself, but you are far crueller to me."

"I must be. I must be punished through you."

"You must be punished through no one."

"I tell you I must. I have asked God to punish me. I asked him all one night on my knees, in the cold, with nothing on but my thin night-gown. You remember that night last week,—*that* night? The thermometer went to zero. That was the night I asked him."

"You are mad!"

"No, no, I'm not: I wish I were!"

"Perhaps it will help you to drive *me* mad? Will it?"

"I said you were cruel. Oh, women could not say such things to—to those who—to those they cared for."

"Well, never mind, then. I don't suppose either of us know exactly what we are saying. Look here: you're not near warmly enough dressed."

"I have on fur," she said, putting her hand to her throat with a certain guilty timidity.

"Um—yes, a little strip around your neck," replied Dering, unconvinced. "But this jacket is the same one you used to wear all those warm October days. You see I remember."

"I am warm enough," she answered, through chattering teeth.

"Oh, if you insist, certainly," he said. Then there fell a silence between them.

"How pretty that is!" she ventured at last, disturbing the brush-ashes with the toe of her boot. The coals glared in red strips through the delicate white rime, like the core of some flaming fruit through its outer husk; here and there little wavering corkscrew films went melting upward.

"Very pretty," muttered Dering, absently. All at once he whirled about, and caught her again in his arms. "Here," he said, "tell me the truth here,—breast to breast, heart to heart, life to life. I know that morbid thought that haunts you. Put it away. Do you hear? I command you. I am your lover. You hear? I command you to stop thinking those awful, ghoulish thoughts. No, don't struggle,—please don't. Dear,—so dear,—let me tell you what I found last night in my prayer-book. It's one I'm awfully fond of: my favorite sister gave it to me,—the lame one, you know, who died. I was thinking about her, and how she used to help me and love me, and I felt as though she were telling me where to turn, and then I put my finger on these words: 'The living—the living shall praise thee, O Lord.' There, darling, that's it,—'The *living*.' Don't you see? Why, it was just like a message,—just like a word from God himself. 'The *living*,' Barbara,—'the *living*!'"

"Have pity!" she cried, hoarsely, clinging to him. "Mercy! have mercy!"

There were great, scalding tears in his eyes. "Oh, darling," he said, "you ask me that?—when you haven't any mercy on yourself? Oh, you poor darling! For heaven's sake, Barbara, look on this thing rationally, humanly, as we were meant to look on such things. Why, darling, think of it! he's not your husband now: he's a spirit,—an essence; no more than that smoke curling up at our feet. There! there! I'm a clumsy brute. Oh, I wish to God God would help me!"

Neither of these frantic creatures caught, in this despairing appeal, that touch of humor which grief, in certain moments of necessity, will invariably borrow from mirth. They grasped each other, trembling violently, and feeling the earth waver beneath their feet like a shaken carpet.

Dering was the first to speak.

"Don't cry like that," he urged. "I can't stand it; I simply can't stand it. Darling, you will drive us both crazy! Oh, why can't you see it all as clearly and blessedly as I can? Barbara, it was meant to be; it was, darling, I know it was. Look here: I didn't mean to come to Virginia this autumn: I was going to Canada with a friend of mine; and he fell through a trap at a theatre and got awfully hurt, and so of course we couldn't go. And then—look here, dear, please listen,—please don't cry like that. Look: this will seem funny to you,—it's got a ghastly sort of fun in it,—but I had taken a dislike to you without seeing you. Honestly, dearest, I had. I made Va—I mean I made some one awfully angry once by telling them I thought your photograph looked coarse. Think of it! I said I thought you looked coarse! My darling,—darling,—*darling!*"

She shuddered afresh, pressing closer to him, and at the same time urging him from her.

"It's what I am," she muttered, brokenly.

"What is?" demanded Dering, startled, then, as her meaning flashed on him, violently indignant. "You seem to take a sort of delight in saying that sort of thing to me," he cried. "You know it's false. You know the very idea's ridiculous. You know I only told you because I thought it might take you out of yourself, it was so perfectly ridiculous. Barbara! *stop crying!*"

"Oh, let me!—let me!" she whispered, with a beseeching movement of her whole figure.

"Why, certainly, if it comforts you, my poor dear," he said, stroking all of her hair that he could reach beneath her close hat. To this she replied by a wail of absolute despair.

"Nothing will ever comfort me again," she cried; "and if it could I ought not to want it to."

"My own girl, I wish I could make you see how morbid you are."

"How can you call it morbidness?" she said, suddenly releasing herself. "Suppose you—had—been—my—husband. Would you want me to forget?"

He noticed the same apprehensive, backward glance that followed any mention of her husband. It touched him with a horrified and gushing tenderness, and he spoke under its warm impulse. He took both her hands, crossing one above the other, and pressing them con-

vincingly between his own as he talked. "Listen: let me tell you how I would have felt," he said. "I would have felt that anything, anything which could add to your happiness while on earth would have my blessing. Any true, honest, unselfish man would feel so. I'm sure that it's just the way he felt."

He was astonished at the stricken cry which broke from her, as she tore her hands away and faced him with tumultuous bosom.

"Then you don't love me?" she cried. "You don't know what love is. You could never say that if you really loved me. It's hideous. You would never understand. Oh, it makes me wild to see how calmly you stand there! You don't know. Men never know. They never really suffer. They get over things so. Their memories are like—like photographs,—they fade out so. Women's memories are like statues: you may break them in pieces, you may leave them out in storms until they are all discolored, you can always put them together again. No matter how stained they are, they always retain their shape. It is our greatest curse. Yes, it is a curse upon us. We can't forget! we can't forget!"

She threw herself forward on her knees among the thick, tangled grasses, and took her face into her desolate-looking, black-gloved hands. Dering stood staring down upon her, helpless, almost hopeless.

"There's nothing I can say," he ventured at last, in a broken voice.

"No, there's nothing,—there's nothing," she said. "If I could forget, there might be something. It's that awful distinct recollection that I have of everything. Why, I can see him now,—I can hear him. I can see him lighting his cigar, coming home in the dusk. I can see the very streaks of light on his hat-brim and between his fingers, and the dead golden-rod stalks looking all pinched and gray about our feet. I can hear him say, 'Look out! *there's* a man-trap!' as he caught his foot in a tangle of grass. I can see the way he used to go about looking for a comfortable chair, with his cigar in one hand, and a book folded over his forefinger. I can see him making tea for me when I was ill, and burning his fingers, and dancing about with pain—ha! ha! ha! He was so absurd sometimes! Oh, Val! Val!" she ended, with a perfect shriek of desolation.

Dering felt as though she had thrust her hand into his breast and was twisting his heart-strings about with her strong, supple fingers, as he had seen her twist the greyhound puppies' ears. At that moment nothing appeared of much consequence. He thought mechanically that he would go out shooting to-morrow, and wondered if the Irish setter would have recovered sufficiently to accompany him.

Suddenly she stretched up to him two feeble, appealing hands. "Let us go home," she said, wearily. "I am so tired. I feel so ill."

He put a gentle arm about her, and she leaned heavily against him as they passed on through the overgrown field, the wild-rose brambles catching against her sorrowful skirts and pulling them backward every moment or so. It was too dark to distinguish anything save the gaunt net-work of the trees against the lowering sky, and the dark jutting of the stable-roof and the tall chimneys of Rosemary.

X.

Barbara, who lay awake nearly all of that night, had been sleeping restlessly for about an hour, when Rameses awakened her. Her method of rousing her mistress was somewhat unique, and consisted in kneeling down by the bed and keeping her large, circular eyes upon those of Barbara. On this occasion she had prefaced this performance by propping an envelope against the pillow, and as her mistress awoke she pushed it towards her with one slender brown finger.

"What is it? A letter? Is it time for the post? Have I slept so late?" asked Barbara, hurriedly. Then she saw that there was no stamp on the envelope, and recognized Dering's handwriting.

"Open the closet door a little," she said, and, leaning on her elbows among the tumbled bed-clothes, she read the note in the clink of light admitted through the window of the closet. Its contents were brief, and ran as follows:

"I am going to New York on the first afternoon train. I will not come to Rosemary again, to torture and worry you. I understand perfectly. Never think that I misjudge you. Could you scratch me just a word or two to take with me? Or send me a marked book,—one that you have marked, of course. If you need me or want to see me at any time, you have only to telegraph Manhattan Club. I will send you my address if I go abroad. I am afraid this is an unearthly hour to rout you up, but I have to leave on a very early train to make connection at Charlottesville, and I feel selfish enough to put you to a little inconvenience when I think of those awful hours of waiting in that village, and how a note or book from you would help me out.

"Yours,
"J. D."

Barbara put back her tangled hair, and looked up at Rameses out of eyes heavy with tears and sleep.

"Who brought this? Is he waiting?" she demanded.

"Yease'm, he's a-waitin'. 'Tis Unc' Jim's boy Granville."

"Well, then, give me some paper, and a pencil, and a book to write on."

She wrote the following note, still lying down in bed, and leaning first to one side and then the other, as her arms began to tingle numbly with the strain:

"If you would like, come over at two o'clock and I can drive you to Charlottesville in time for the 6.30 Express, and then you won't have any waiting to do. If not, write me again, and I will send the book you wish to the station. I thank you with all my (she had written "heart," then scratched it out elaborately and put a very distinct "power" after it) power for your kindness to me always.

"BARBARA."

The signature also showed signs of fluctuation. It had first been "Yours ever, B. R. P.," then "As ever," then merely "B.," and finally

a rather infinitesimal "Barbara,"—as though she were trying to express a whisper in writing by the smallness of her chirography.

The reply to this missive came shortly,—a telegraphic formula of ten words :

"Will be at Rosemary 2 sharp. You are so good. J."

When Rameses had prepared her bath, and thrown wide all four of the large windows, Barbara saw that it was raining gently but constantly. The whole lawn had a sodden, unkempt appearance, and some plough-horses that had strayed into the enclosure glistened dismally. The roads would be in a frightful state, and she thought with a palpable shudder of her long, dreary, companionless homeward drive that evening. She decided that she would not trust herself to be her own charioteer on such a gloomy night, and had recourse to the heretofore despised "carry-all" and "Unc' Joshua."

Dering was punctual to the second, and they set off at ten minutes past two, half smothered in the fur carriage-robcs with which Miss Fridiswig had heaped them.

It was still raining as they drove out upon the high-road, but with less steadiness, and the mists upon the hills, which were of a dark, soaked purple, had lifted, and hung in dissolving wreaths here and there above the rich slopes. Beauregard Walsingham rode behind to open gates, and Unc' Joshua had the front seat of the carry-all to himself, slipping about at particularly uneven bits in the road, with a creaking sound of damp leather. This carriage was perhaps twenty years old, and rattled in more places than one could imagine it possible for a vehicle of any description to rattle,—filling up the gaps in Dering's and Barbara's somewhat spasmodic conversation, as Feuillet says the noise of Paris fills up the gaps in a Parisian's life.

He had told her perhaps ten times of her goodness in driving with him to Charlottesville, for the same number of times she had replied that it was only a pleasure, and they had admired in every variety of language every variety of tone in the dense gray air about them, when he turned abruptly to her.

"How I will miss you!" he said, in a strangled voice, and then twice, back of his teeth, in that way he had, and speaking in French for fear of Unc' Joshua, "*Je t'aime!—je t'aime!*"

"No, no," she whispered, bracing herself away from him by means of her hand against his knee under the fur robes. He drew off his gloves and held it there, his pulses throbbing riotously, his eyes on hers.

"Don't look at me," she said, with some confusion. "It is so light."

"I believe I could see your eyes in the dark, like a tiger's."

"Don't talk so loud. He hears every word. They understand a great deal more than you think. Oh, what a wonderful tone of red that field is! Why, it has a bloom on it like a grape."

"Yes,—lovely, lovely. Leave your hand there, please."

"I never—really, I never dreamed of such a color. And, oh, that broom-field beyond, with the dark patches! And the belt of black woods! Oh!"

"Yes, and that ragged blue line beyond. What is that? Is it the Blue Ridge? No, don't take it away,—not yet."

"Yes, that's the Blue Ridge. I wish we could see it from Rosemary. But you should drive through all this in June."

"Well, why shouldn't I? I mean to. Look: I have something to ask you. It isn't much. Look: I just want to take off your glove. May I?"

"No," she said, drawing short, difficult breaths; "no. How can you talk to me like that?"

"Good heavens! how am I to talk to you? You should have let me go as I meant to. Why did you propose to drive me to Charlottesville? You knew how it would be—— No, I don't mean that. Forgive me. But you must know that I can't be near you without telling you how I feel to you. You must know that. Did you expect me to drive all these miles like a stock or a stone? I'm afraid that's not as original as it might be, eh? But look: let me take your glove off?"

In reply she drew her hand decidedly out of his, and buried it in her lap. Her face was turned from him so that he got a mere suggestion of her profile, but he saw that she was blushing desperately.

"I bother you so," he said, with regret.

"No, it isn't that. Oh, what a water-color study that man would make!"

"Excellent," admitted Dering. The man in question was a young negro of strapping figure, to which his blue jeans shirt and trousers had modelled themselves accurately. On his head was a moth-eaten seal-skin cap of a delicious mingled brown. His hands, one of which was bandaged with dirty white cotton, were clasped behind his throat, and he carried his gun through his bended arms.

On his trousers a brace of just-shot hares, dangling to and fro, had left a moist crimson stain. It was the highest note of color in this study of faded blues and browns, the cotton bandage and the breasts and tails of the poor "molly-cottons" being the only high lights, so to speak.

"Isn't he like one of what's-his-name's aquarelles? Look, now! there, as he comes out against that dull-yellowish field,—there, with that patchy gray sky above—— Oh, I wish I could paint,—with my hands, I mean: I am always painting pictures to myself with my fancy."

"So am I," said Dering. She colored deeply again, and seemed to have caught the button of her glove in the fur robe.

"Let me help you," he suggested, and, having done so, kept her hand in his. She had not time to withdraw it before they were aware from "Unc' Joshua's" back that something unusual was going on in the road beyond. There is nothing more expressive than a negro coachman's back,—not even the eyes of a hungry dog. Apprehension was written in the hunched curve of "Unc' Joshua's" vertebrae and the outward crook of his bowed arms. He half rose, still curiously contorted, and peered from side to side between his horse's ears.

"What's up? Sit down. What's the matter?" said Dering, who was sometimes exasperated by the theatrical gymnastics of would-be-impressive darkies. "Come, what's all this about?" he demanded again.

"Suppn's done broke down in de road, suh," replied Unc' Joshua, still curving and peering,—*"a wagon or suppn'."*

Dering stood up also.

"What is it?" said Barbara, a little nervously.

"I sees! I sees!" now cried Unc' Joshua: "'tis one uh dem young Buzzies. He cyart done broke down,—right 'crost de road, too."

"One of the Buzzies!" cried Barbara, in dismay. "Good gracious! we will have to pick him up if his trap's broken. It's too bad! Look again, Uncle Joshua. Are you sure his wagon's broken? Perhaps the harness is just tangled."

"Norm," said the old black, positively, "dey ain' nuttin' twangled dar. 'Tis bust all tuh scrakshuns" (*anglicé* unknown).

"I suppose this is young Buzzy coming here now," said Dering, in a surly tone. "What a name!—*Buzzy*!"

"It isn't near as bad as the man," said Barbara, gloomily.

Young Buzzy here appeared at the side of the carry-all and thrust out a lank hand, exposing a frayed red-flannel undershirt-sleeve in the vehemence of his gesture.

"Howdy?" he said, including them both in this concise greeting. "Howdy, Unc' Joshua?" he added.

Unc' Joshua removed his battered silk hat, with an elaborate shifting of lines and whip from one hand to the other.

"Mornin', suh," he said,—"*mornin', mornin'!*"

"I cert'n'y am lucky," pursued Mr. Buzzy, again addressing Barbara and Dering. "I wuzn't bawn with a caul for nothin'. Hyah! hyah! Ever read David Copperfield, Mr.— Excuse *me*, but are you Mr. George Pomfret?"

"No; my name's Dering," replied the addressed, whose manner was perfectly courteous, if somewhat frost-bitten. Barbara was nibbling her inner lip fiercely and trying to look as usual.

"Can't we help you?" pursued Dering. "You seem to have come to grief."

"Come to grief!" echoed the other. "Well, it's more like grief had come to me. Hyah! hyah!" And he laughed again, producing a sound like that made by a stick drawn rapidly along an iron railing. This laugh jarred so on Dering that he felt as though he would like to loosen his skin and jump out of it: as the next best thing, he jumped out of the carry-all and made his way to the wreck of Mr. Buzzy's trap. That gentleman followed shortly, standing resignedly by while Dering inspected the chaos of wine-sap apples, potatoes, and bundles of fodder which were heaped up about the body of the broken wagon. Its owner ventured no explanation, but remained passive, holding a hairy wrist in either hand, and rubbing his thumbs about on his arms underneath his red-flannel shirt-sleeves. He was otherwise attired in a suit of snuff-brown stripes alternating with black, wore a soft gray felt hat, and a red satin tie with green bars across it.

His face was of a shiny fairness, deepening to a mottled plum-color on his cheeks and the bridge of his nose, and his eyebrows, which he continually rubbed the wrong way with one of those restless thumbs, were of a pale straw-color, over eyes which matched the tint upon his cheeks. He had lost a tooth directly in front, and could not keep his tongue from incessantly playing in and out of this unpleasant hollow.

Dering felt a great loathing swell his throat, and as Buzzy sidled nearer over the soggy ground, his perfume of damp cloth, hair-oil, and stable did not mitigate this sentiment. Was it possible that he and Barbara would have to drive the rest of the way to Charlottesville behind that reeking personality?

"I suppose the old nigger and you and I couldn't patch it up between us?" he suggested at last, but rather doubtfully.

"Not 'less we could work meracles," replied young Buzzy. "No, that wagon's a goner."

"I'm afraid it is," said Dering.

"It cert'n'y is," affirmed its owner.

XI.

Dering remained silent after Buzzy's last remark. He could not bring himself to make any suggestion concerning a more practical species of aid,—namely, the transference of Buzzy and his goods and chattels to their vehicle. They walked back to the carry-all in silence.

"Can you do anything about it?" said Barbara.

"I'm afraid not," replied Dering, sadly.

Barbara was also silent, struggling with the same distaste which had tied Dering's tongue. Young Buzzy kept a steady and resigned gaze upon the wagon, still thumbing his lean arms. Finally Barbara said, with a sort of burst,—

"Can't we give you a lift?"

"I wuz thinkin' 'bout that," replied the unfortunate. "I cert'n'y would be ubbliged."

"What will you do with your horse?" here suggested Dering, with a sudden hope.

Mr. Buzzy was quite prepared for this emergency. "I'll give the little darky somethin' tuh lead him," he replied, adding, with a kind of tilt in Barbara's direction, "With your permission, uv co'se."

"Why, certainly," she answered.

He went off to attend to this little transaction, and Barbara and Dering clutched each other's hands with a simultaneous movement.

"Will we have to take him *all* the way?" said Dering, almost tearfully.

"I'm afraid so," said Barbara, who was entirely tearful.

There was a lump in her throat that made her feel as though she had swallowed a hot hard-boiled egg, shell and all, and it had stuck just below the root of her tongue. Their hands tightened, they cast a desperate glance about: young Buzzy was again approaching them.

"It's damnable!" said Dering, with perhaps pardonable violence,—especially as he apologized immediately afterwards.

"No, don't apologize," urged Barbara, hurriedly. "I say it's—it's 'damnable' too!"

They burst out laughing just as Buzzy came up.

"We were laughing at my poor little follower's evident fright about leading your horse," explained Barbara, with suave mendacity.

"He is right skeered," Mr. Buzzy admitted, "but he'll git over it."

'Jinks' always balks at firs',—'Jinks' my hawse, yuh know. It's mighty kind in you to give me a lif', Miss Barb—I mean Mis' Pomfret. Excuse *me*, but that 'Missis' business always sticks in my throat when I look at you. You don't look a day older'n you did when we boys an' girls used tuh dress the church for Chris'mus—"

"I don't want to hurry you, Mr. Buzzy," here interpolated Dering, "but Mrs. Pomfret is kindly driving me to Charlottesville to catch the 6.30 train, and I wouldn't like to miss it."

"Cert'n'y—cert'n'y," said Mr. Buzzy, who still hesitated, however. He sidled towards Unc' Joshua and took him into his confidence in an undertone. "Say, Unc' Joshua,"—it was thus that he expressed himself,—"'s there any room fur them pertaters 'n' wine-saps onder the seat or anywhere? It'll mean a drink in Charlottesville, yuh know."

While he and Unc' Joshua arranged this matter, Barbara and Dering again devoured one another's rebellious faces with hungry eyes. All at once Dering stooped and pretended to be arranging something on the floor of the carry-all. In truth he was pressing his lips rapidly, first against Barbara's gown, and then against the curve of her instep.

"Oh, don't! don't!" she urged, in a vehement whisper. "My horrid boot! Oh, *don't!*—PLEASE!"

He lifted his head, a little flushed, and looked at her with a certain brilliancy, as of one who has been drinking wine. At the same moment Mr. Buzzy came around to the other side of the carriage.

"If you'll excuse *me*," he remarked, "I'll git one ur two pa'cels 'fore we start."

"Certainly," replied Barbara again, and again Mr. Buzzy went off in the direction of his wagon. He, his wine-saps and potatoes, being safely stowed away, they started towards Charlottesville, stopped every now and then by young Walsingham's appeals for help regarding the recreant Jinks, who, as his master had said, balked sometimes. Buzzy himself was inclined to be talkative, and told various anecdotes, including Unc' Joshua in the conversation, with great geniality.

"Name of a dog," exclaimed Dering, in French, "this is atrocious!"

"Name of a blue pig, it is!" replied Barbara, gravely. They laughed again.

"Yo're laughin' reminds me," said Mr. Buzzy, "of a story my ole Unc' Nelson Cunnin'ham use'ter tell." And forthwith they were regaled with one of the extremely long anecdotes of Mr. Nelson Cunningham.

"Please put your hand on my knee again,—just once," urged Dering, under cover of the boisterous hilarity which his own anecdotal powers had called forth in Mr. Buzzy. "I won't touch it if you tell me not to." He waited anxiously, and was presently rewarded by a soft clasp upon his knee, which sent such a delightful thrill through him that he actually smiled in response to Mr. Buzzy's toothy grin.

"That's what I call a first-rater," announced the latter, appealing afterwards to Unc' Joshua. "What *you* think, Unc' Joshua?"

"Fus'-rate, suh,—fus'-rate!"

"Hyah! hyah! Unc' Joshua, *you* know a good story when you hear one—eh?"

"Yes, *suh*! Hyah! hyah!"

"Br-r-r! I wish we could walk the rest of the way!" said Dering, in overwhelming disgust.

"It is dreadful," admitted Barbara. "But here's the Long Bridge. We are nearly there."

"What a lovely country it is!" breathed Dering, leaning far out to have a glimpse of the pretty hills that hug Charlottesville, before they were en-tunnelled by the Long Bridge. "I am never so glad that I am a Southerner as when I drive near Charlottesville on a day like this."

"Or when you think that a few like Mr. B. are your compatriots," suggested Barbara, who was so bitterly unhappy that she felt like indulging in wild laughter. As the rumble of the Long Bridge drowned their voices, they could talk more unrestrainedly.

"You were so good to come," said Dering, to whom the novelty of the idea made this remark seem ever novel.

"I *wanted* to come," answered Barbara, who found no monotony in this reply.

"And you will telegraph if you need me,—or—or—anything?"

"Yes."

"Promise."

"Well."

"Say you promise."

"I promise."

He got his arm around her: for an instant she breathed difficultly against his side; then they rolled out again into the faded daylight.

"My Unc' Nelson Cunningham use'ter say he had eyes in the skin of his back, like a pertater, when he sat befo' two young folks goin' thoo' a tunnel," remarked Mr. Buzzy, jovially, as the horses struck out again into a round trot. "Hyah! hyah!"

"Hyah! hyah!" chuckled Unc' Joshua.

"Beast! I'd like to choke him!" ejaculated Dering between his teeth.

"I wish you would," said Barbara, who was of a lively flame-color.

"You don't seem to perrieiate my remarks?" here put in Mr. Buzzy, to whom this twisting of words constituted a form of humor.

"I don't think we were listening at the time of your last observation," said Dering, grimly.

"I said my Unc' Nel——"

"Good gracious! is the Rivanna always so swollen at this time of the year?" asked Barbara, looking out.

"Pen's on th' rains. I said my Unc'——"

"The rains? But then it always rains a good deal in November, doesn't it?"

"Well, right smart, gen'lly. Unc' Nelson said——"

"Oh, yes, I remember now, of course. I wonder if any one could swim the Rivanna?"

"I done it, lars' summer," announced Buzzy, with an impressive seriousness. He twisted about, hanging both arms over the back of the seat, and looking down at that lazy river as though he expected from it some sign of recognition.

"You must be a very good swimmer."

"Tolabul. Torm Cunnin'ham—my Unc' Nelson Cunnin'ham's boy—kin outswim me, though. That boy kin *swim*!—You know him, Unc' Joshua?"

"Sut'n'y, suh,—sut'n'y, sut'n'y. Marse Torm kin *swim*!"

"You mus' remember him, Miss Ba—excuse *me*, Mrs. Pomfret,—don't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Barbara, vaguely. It was a species of utter, apathetic misery that had seized her. They had now entered Charlottesville, and the drenched, forsaken village streets were beginning to depress her unutterably.

"Drive us a little way up Park Street, Uncle Joshua," she said, and leaned back, looking silently about, as they rolled along this charming avenue, which is not unlike Lovers' Lane in Newport.

It would be hard to decide which was most miserable, Barbara or Dering. Buzzy's presence thrust into their *tête-à-tête* was something as when a New-Orleans masker during Mardi-Gras shoves his grotesque self between two lovers about to embrace. Their words choked them, and they not only saw the actual Buzzy, but had exasperating visions of brother and sister Buzzies, with his home in the background,—a home whose whitewashed walls bore many excrescences in the shape of old photographs framed in round walnut frames, whose square piano was covered with a red-and-black-stamped woollen cover, whose sofa was of green reps disgorging black horse-hair, and whose hall was carpeted with oil-cloth and strewn with round rush mats. Besides, it was impossible to get rid of him: he had at once announced his intention of "sticking by them," to see Dering off, and to provide for Barbara when he should be gone: so they drove to the station still with Buzzy on the box-seat. Barbara, who had a nervous and uncontrollable terror of locomotives, grasped Dering's hand unceremoniously as they neared the net-work of tracks.

"Hyah! hyah!" whispered Buzzy, whose shoulders they saw move hilariously.

"Hyah! hyah!" echoed Unc' Joshua, huskily.

They got out of the carry-all in a dumb but violent passion, and walked together to the waiting-room.

This waiting-room was big and airy, and when they entered there was no one else in possession. Mr. Buzzy officiously darted off to see after Dering's luggage, and they were at last free to indulge in conversation without an audience. Unfortunately, all the tumultuous ideas which had clamored for vent in the carry-all seemed now to have followed hot on the heels of the vanished Buzzy.

"I wonder if that clock's right?" ventured Dering.

"Oh, of course," said Barbara. "They wouldn't dare have it wrong."

"No, I suppose not," he admitted. "Then I've got three-quarters of an hour."

"A little more than that. Suppose we sit down?"

"Good Lord! what an oaf I am! You must be tired to death."

They sat down, after Dering had made an elaborate arrangement of his satchel and overcoat.

"Thirty-nine minutes now," said Barbara. "Does a waiting-room depress you as it does me?"

"I don't think anything could be worse."

"I almost wish I hadn't come."

"Don't say that!" He slipped his hand through the hollow arm of the seat, and took surreptitious possession of her now ungloved fingers.

"Mind," she whispered, "the ticket-agent is just opposite."

"Disgusting!" murmured Dering. They were silent for a second or two, at the end of which time he took a small object from his pocket and laid it in her lap.

"I want you to keep that," he said. "It's—it's the prayer-book I was telling you of,—the one, you know, I found *that* in,—about the 'living,' you know. Don't shrink, darling."

She turned to him with a sudden, wild movement that caused the little volume to slip on the floor at her feet. "Oh, I am so unhappy! I am so unhappy!" she said, giving him her clinched hands, and withdrawing them as suddenly. Both stooped together to lift the fallen prayer-book.

"Perhaps this will help you. You won't let me help you," he said, despairingly. She sank back between the iron arms of her chair, holding the book against her breast, and moving her lips slightly as though in prayer. Dering bent down his head near her.

"Say something for me," he whispered, shakenly.

"I am; I am. It's what I'm doing."

"God keep you, my pure one, my true one!"

"Well, ef you two knew the trouble I'd had checkin' yo' thousand-and-one trunks, sir, you'd take up a subscription for me right here in this station-house!" ejaculated at this juncture the voice of Mr. Buzzy.

Dering looked up at him from under his lowered brows with a quietly murderous expression; Barbara, bending over, pretended to be tying her shoe.

"How many of them cur'ous boxes have you got, anyhow?" pursued the young gentleman, entirely unconscious. He wiped his whole face and the spaces behind his fat ears with a large purple-and-white silk handkerchief, regarding the fabric afterwards intently, and then crumpling it into his hat, which he replaced on his head. "Why don' chu charter a cyar 'n' chuck yore things in that? 'T'ould be a heap less trouble. Well, here yo' checks."

"Thanks," said Dering, pocketing them. "I'm sorry you had so much trouble."

"Oh, 'twan't any reel trouble," replied Buzzy, genially. "I was jes' gassin'. Look hyuh: wouldn't you like somethin' tuh eat?—both o' you? They've got a reel nice resterrant hyuh."

"Nothing,—nothing at all, thank you," replied both, hastily.

"Not a cupper coffee? Some tea, then? They have firs'-rate i'scream—sommer that? Not a *thing*? Well, Miss—a—Misses Pomfret 'll die 'fore she gits home: *you* may git on a buffet cyar. Lemme git you a cupper tea?"

This monologue was interspersed with a series of "No, thank yous,"

"No, thanks," from Barbara and Dering. Their tormentor finally desisted.

"Well," he ejaculated at last, "think I'll set down."

Barbara and Dering looked at each other with eyes that groaned. They had now a scant twenty minutes.

"Yo' train's due in twenty minutes," said Mr. Buzzy, blithely. "Got all yo' things together?"

"Yes," snapped Dering.

"That's right. I reckon you're right use'ter travellin'. Ben all over Europe, haven't yuh?"

"No."

"Excuse me, but yuh cert'n'y look hit."

"Did you say my train was due in twenty minutes?"

"Seventeen, now."

"Would you mind asking if it's on time?"

"I know," said Mr. Buzzy. "'Tis."

Barbara felt as though she could not stand it another moment. Her ears sang, and she hated Buzzy in a way that astonished herself. She thought that she would almost rejoice to see the Express that was to bear Dering from her roll over the odoriferous body of the other. She stood up to her full height, with a quick, gasping breath, and then sat down again.

"Are you ill?" said Dering, in alarm.

"What's the matter?" said Buzzy, also scrambling to his feet.

"Nothing. I was crushing my dress."

"Ha! *that!*" laughed Buzzy. "You shot up in such a hurry I reckoned yore bustle must have springs in it!"

"Mr. Buzzy," said Dering, in elaborately slow and distinct tones, "I have something of importance to say to Mrs. Pomfret, and I have now only thirteen minutes in which to say it. Could you be so very kind as to leave us together?"

If he had thought to freeze Buzzy by this frigid and biting address, he was vastly mistaken.

"Cert'n'y,—cert'n'y," acquiesced that personage at once. "Why didn't you tip me the wink? I'd er twigged. Reckon I'll go 'n' git a snack." And he went.

XII.

"Now!" said Dering, looking at her. His look was so intense, so beseeching, that she imagined herself in his arms.

"My heart aches so!—it aches so!" she said, piteously. Her lip began to quiver, and she turned from him, having that wisdom which teaches a woman to let a man observe the signs of her grief everywhere save in her face. She did not want Dering to carry away a picture of her features pursed up in the ridiculous distortions of real sorrow.

"It aches so!" she said, again. "I wish I could cut it out!" She ground her teeth a little savagely. "I suffer too much!" she panted.

Dering came close to her. His heart's core yearned over her, but he had a consciousness in the very curls on the back of his head that

the ticket-agent was regarding them interestedly through his little window.

"My love,—my heart's heart,—what can I do?" he whispered. "What can I say? You will let me write?"

"Yes, yes," she said, in a choking voice. It hurt her to think that he had considered not writing as a possibility. The big railway-clock ticked on pompously.

"Can't you stop that odious thing?" she asked, and then began to laugh hysterically.

"Hush!" said Dering, taking her upper arms into a firm grasp, and looking at her with bright, masterful eyes. "This has been too much for you," he said, regretfully, as they sat down again. "It wouldn't have been if that gr-r-r— that bad-smelling scoundrel hadn't——"

Here Barbara began to laugh again: he tried to silence her as before, and ended by joining in.

"Oh, how *ghastly* it all is!" she exclaimed, finally, as, their paroxysm over, she began to wipe her eyes with little sideward sweeps of the different hems of her pocket-handkerchief. Then, with a violent start, "Oh! is he coming again? I thought I heard him."

"If he does, there'll be one Buzzy less in his apparently prolific family," replied Dering, grimly.

"Well, never mind him. Say something to me that I can remember,—something gentle. Oh, *God!* I am so wretched!"

"Listen, then. I love you,—I *love* you,—I *LOVE* you."

"Hush! be careful! Thank you. Oh, you are so good!—Oh! *look* at that horrible baby!"

"Gir-r-r! Why did you call my attention to it?"

"But it is so hideous. It fascinates me. Look! *look!* Why, its head wobbles about just like 'She's'!"

"Isn't that rather ungrammatical?" he asked, making the national joke then in vogue.

"And its hands!—they are all creased, as if they had been washed and rough-dried and never ironed out. Isn't that little, blue-worsted cap it has on, awful? I suppose that woman is its mother. *Look* at her poking it under the chin! How can she! Oh! it's blowing bubbles out of its mouth. Oh, how awful! Can't we get away from it?—anywhere!—anywhere! Let's go out on the platform."

She dragged him out just in time to see his train come in. As it clanked by, she lifted her great, wretched eyes, heavy with shadows, full to his.

"I feel as if I had ten hearts," she said, "each too big for me, and as if every time those heavy wheels turned over they crushed one."

"Darling!" was all that he could answer, in a tone of entreaty.

"Will you write from Washington?"

"This very night. I'll write on the train and post it when we get to Washington. Barbara?"

"Yes. What is it? What is it?"

"Do you—love me—just a little?"

"You know I do. It is different, but I do. Dearly,—dearly."

"What do you mean by 'different'?"

"I don't know. I'll write it to you. Don't let those men run so near you with those great trucks: it makes me nervous."

"Then you will write to me?"

"Yes. They will be very stupid letters, though. There isn't anything to write about here."

"You silly dear!" Barbara winced. "As if I wanted to hear about anything but yourself! You'll put *that* in sometimes, won't you? And you'll——"

"I reckon you'd better be gittin' yo' things together," broke in Mr. Buzzy, who here came towards them, nibbling the end of a chicken wing. "Excuse *me*, but this fried chick'n's too good tuh let slide. I'll take yo' satchel, suh."

"Thanks," said Dering. He turned and grasped Barbara's hands once more, as Buzzy disappeared into the sleeper. They both tried to speak, swallowed, and murmured some indistinct words, which were drowned in the noise of a passing truck. The locomotive gave a series of hoarse, barking whistles, and the bell began to clang slowly, while the jarring "jink-jank" of a train about to move off passed through the whole fabric. Deering loosed her hands, clutched them once more, gave her a heart-broken look, and plunged into the Pullman, just as Mr. Buzzy swung staggering off on the platform. Barbara had withdrawn at once into the waiting-room, and was busy gathering up her muff and umbrella, when Buzzy rejoined her.

"I say, now," he began, in a cajoling tone, "come 'n' have a little snack. The coffee's jes' ez hot 'n' good. Will you?"

"Thank you, I'm not at all hungry," stammered poor Barbara. The spell of the horrible waiting-room was upon her, and she could not imagine how happiness ever came to human beings who lived in a world inhabited also by locomotives, negro porters, and young men of Buzzy's ilk. She stared at him absently with her wide, beautiful eyes, twisting the folds of her umbrella tighter and tighter in her strong, ungloved hands.

"I'm not at all hungry," she said, again.

"Some wine, then," he urged. "You look mighty pale. Virginia claret's firs'-rate,—mh?"

"I'm not thirsty; thank you very much."

"Well, but jes' fuh med'cine,—mh?"

"I don't want anything. I don't want any wine, thank you, Mr. Buzzy."

Buzzy rubbed one of his lemon-colored eyebrows with a contemplative and dubious thumb.

"Uv co'se, ef you're bent on it," he said.

"Thank you," replied Barbara, vaguely.

When she got into the cab which he had ordered for her, he stepped in also.

"Jes' drive with you to th' liv'ry-stable 'n' see you in yore own cay'idge," he explained. "Unc' Joshua took his horses there tuh feed 'm, uv co'se."

"Of course," said Barbara.

"Cert'n'y has got dark sudden," he exclaimed, in another tone, peering up at the dim sky, first through one window, then through the other.

"Very," said Barbara.

"Choll'tt'sville ain't lighted 's well 's might be,—is it?"

"Not at all," said Barbara. A droll sort of parody on a celebrated saying began to drum regularly in her ears. She repeated it over and over: "Some are born with neighbors, some achieve neighbors, and some have neighbors thrust upon them." She was beginning to think that Buzzy meant to drive all the way back to Rosemary with her. His monotonous voice interrupted her reverie:

"Wonder why yo' frien' was so set on takin' that p'tic'lar train?"

"He wanted to be in New York to-morrow."

"Well, he could 'a' taken th' 7.30 jes' 's well."

"What 7.30?" said Barbara, excitedly.

"Why, the 7.30 Express."

She looked at him, feeling a quiver run through her,—a thrill of indignation and disappointment. "Do you mean to say that there is another train that goes at 7.30?" she said, in a very low voice.

"Why, cert'n'y," replied Mr. Buzzy. He took off his hat, regarded the purple-and-white material with which it was brimming over, and then, as if undecided, placed hat and contents between his knees.

"Did you mention that to Mr. Dering?" questioned the low voice.

"Never thought tuh. Thought he knew, uv co'se. *Hyuh* we are!" And he bounded out through the carriage door, which only opened after vigorous batterings of his knee. He appeared almost simultaneously at the other door, through which he thrust his affable visage.

"'Sall right," he announced. "Unc' Joshua's all ready,—jes' gotter light th' candles. Mr. Payne'll attend tuh them."

She leaned back in apathetic silence, after another dreary "Thank you," and watched Mr. Payne's stalwart figure in its shiny oil-cloth cloak, which reflected back the white-gray sky in a faint glisten. A swift, pattering rain was falling, although through the fleecy clouds the light of a full but unseen moon filtered wanly. "I don't b'leeve you'll need no candles," said Mr. Buzzy, turning around and around, and regarding the dripping sky with face and hands uplifted. Mr. Payne put those articles in, however, and Unc' Joshua drove off, after Barbara had thanked both men for their services.

"Oh, it don't make a dit o' bifference!" exclaimed the jovial Buzzy in return, having recourse to one of his contorted combinations of words.

Barbara, rolling along with closed eyes over the rough and night-veiled roads that led from Charlottesville to Rosemary, tried to imagine what Dering was then doing. She fancied him asking the porter some trivial question, raising his voice a little in order to be heard above the incessant clinking of surrounding objects. Then he took out a memorandum-book and a pencil. He began his letter to her. She tried to fancy the first words as they would look when written, but she saw so many terms of endearment that she was undecided. Her imagination was disturbed by visions of the omnipresent and always thirsty child who traverses the aisles of Pullman sleeping-cars in the direction of the

water-cooler, followed by an anxious nurse-maid attached to the end of its petticoat. This child had, in her imagination, flaxen hair which was begrimed with cinders, and a corresponding complexion. It drank water incessantly, spilling it copiously over its fat, chapped chin, and when it was not drinking water it was gnawing a large drum-stick of chicken or munching huge pieces of gingerbread.

There was the semi-invalid, who had gone to sleep with her head on a soot-streaked pillow. There was the drummer, who had also gone to sleep in a quilted travelling-cap, with a fat hand, ornamented by a large blood-stone ring, displayed upon his gay trousers. There was the young demoiselle with abundant curls and giggles, who was travelling alone under charge of the conductor, and to whom the conductor was now addressing a series of facetious remarks. There was the section full of young men and women who talked in such loud, boisterous tones that their conversation could be heard above everything else. There was the fat woman who was forever putting things in her satchel and taking them out; the two middle-aged discussers of politics; the—— She opened her eyes and leaned forward, far into the raw, mist-laden air. The hills were a blurred outline, the fields masses of rich gloom. She had one thing, at all events, to be thankful for: she was not in a Pullman sleeping-car.

Unc' Joshua had to lift her bodily out of the carriage in his strong arms when they reached Rosemary. He and Rameses almost carried her up-stairs to her bedroom, where a blithe fire was blazing and a pretty tea-table drawn up before its glow. Martha Ellen, on turning to greet her mistress with a pleased smile, was horrified to see her cast herself on her knees before the big chintz-covered chair and break into wild sobbing.

"Lor! Miss Barb'ra! Lor! Miss Barb'ra, chile! *Lor!* honey!" she ejaculated, at intervals. "Miss Barb'ra,—my *own* Miss Barb'ra,—*don'* cry so! *Don'*, honey! Lemme go fur Sarah. I'm goin' fur Sarah."

She flew on nimble feet, and returned with this Sarah, who was a little, delicate, thin woman of about forty, possessing a face as keen and sweet as it was plain. She wore her black wool in neat masses pinned close to her head, and her small figure in its close black gown resembled an exclamation-point, so slight and decided was it.

Though so diminutive, she was apparently very strong, for she stooped and lifted Barbara from where she was kneeling, and took her on her breast. She said nothing, merely motioning Rameses to leave them, by a certain movement of her head. Then she began to rock herself to and fro, with a gentle, crooning sound, such as women make over ailing babies, stroking the lovely, copper-colored head on her breast from time to time with her tender, dark fingers, sometimes pressing a dusky cheek against its bright lustre, sometimes reaching up furtively to dash the tears from her own eyes.

After a while she coaxed her mistress to lie on the sofa, while she prepared a warm bath for her, moving about the room with noiseless swiftness, her very skirts having a subdued sound, which was to the noise made by the skirts of other women as a whisper is to laughter.

The room was soon fragrant with the attar of roses which she had shaken into the tepid water until it was milky, and she then arranged some fine linen garments on the bed, and leaned over her mistress, saying, in a delicious guttural,—

"Miss Barb'ra, darlin', yo' barth's ready. I'll go out in th' hall till you call me."

In reply, Barbara reached up her arms and drew down the small, woolly head against her shoulder.

"Oh," she sighed, "I am so miserable! I am so miserable! I am so miserable!"

"Yes, yes, darlin' Miss Barb'ra, but joy comes in th' mornin'."

"Oh, but when will it be morning? Comfort me, Sarah! Sarah, can't you comfort me? I comforted you that time when you were so unhappy. Didn't I? Didn't I?"

"Th' dear Lord he knows you did, Miss Barb'ra. I'll never forget you,—no, not whiles I lives,—no, not when I'm dead. I'd come to you out er my grave ef you called for me."

"Don't talk of graves!—talk of life,—life,—life! Oh, Sarah, isn't death a dreadful thought? Isn't it awful? Don't you *wish* we could just disappear,—just be snatched away somewhere, and nothing be left of us? Oh, I am so unhappy! Comfort me! Comfort me! Can't you think of anything that will comfort me?"

"Think of how good you are, darlin'. That ought tuh comfort you. Think how ev'ybody loves you,—ev'ybody, Miss Barb'ra, down to my po' little girl, that you has done so much for. She thinks they ain' nobody like Miss Barb'ra. She says a little prayer for you ev'y night. Think of all the good you has done. Think of how good an' sweet an' kin' you are, *all* the time, to ev'ybody. Oh, Miss Barb'ra, darlin' Miss Barb'ra, you oughtn' tuh be unhappy! Now take yo' nice, warm barth, an' then you'll feel so much better. I put so much scent in it, th' whole room smells jes' like summer-time. Come on: yo' pretty little night-gown's all ready, an' th' white furs all spread out fur you tuh stan' on. Come on, Miss Barb'ra. Let Sarah help you up. Think of how ev'ybody loves you,—th' farm-han's an' ev'ybody."

"Do they really love me, Sarah?" asked the girl, in the childish tone and manner that always accompanies absolute misery. "It *is* good to be loved: isn't it, Sarah? It helped you that time for me to love you: didn't it? I'm glad they love me." Then, as Sarah was about to leave the room, "Put your arms around me once more. Hold me tight,—tight,—tighter still: I don't care if it hurts. You love me,—don't you, Sarah?"

"Th' dear Saviour in heaven *he* knows I does, Miss Barb'ra."

"And you think I'll be happy some day?"

"Miss Barb'ra, I knows you will,—I *knows* you will."

"And will you pray about it?"

"I duz pray about it, darlin' Miss Barb'ra. They ain't *no* time, night or day, when I prays, that I don't pray 'bout you. Now *take* yo' barth, 'fore it gets cold."

She went out, closing the door, which Barbara opened almost immediately afterwards.

"Sarah——"

"Yes'm?"

"Sarah, come here just one minute. Just hold me again one minute, and say you think I'll be happy."

The little woman clasped the beautiful figure with fervent, sinewy brown arms.

"I knows you will!" she reiterated. "I *knows* you will!"

"And you love me?"

"Miss Barb'ra, the good Lord himself will have to make you understan' that. I can't seem to do it. *Darlin'* Miss Barb'ra!"

When, having taken her fragrant bath, Barbara lay like some sweet-smelling flower between the fine sheets of her girlhood's bed, Sarah, kneeling beside her in the firelight, stroked gently and unceasingly the languid, half-bare arm nearest her.

"That's so good! that's so good!" murmured the girl, in a tired voice. Suddenly she roused herself.

"Oh, I forgot! Look on the table, Sarah, and hand me that little book,—the one with the cross on it. There; no,—a little farther to the end. There, that's it." She took it eagerly, and, while slipping it under her pillow, kissed it furtively.

"Rub my arm some more, Sarah." In another moment she started up again. "Sarah, bring the candle. I'm going to choose a verse. You open it. What's your finger on? Read it."

Sarah read slowly, in her uncertain, soft tone, and with her earnest face close to the fine print. It is quite true that the little colored woman read the following words to that beautiful, distracted, quivering, yearning creature in the bed beside her,—read these words:

"For in death no man remembereth thee, and who——"

"That will do,—that will do, Sarah. Put out the candle."

As the warm dusk of the firelight again encompassed them, she reached out and drew Sarah to her with both arms.

"You don't know why, dear, but that was a message to me. Perhaps—I—may—be—happy—again."

"Miss Barb'ra, I *knows* you will!"

"Well, good-night, little Sarah. Don't forget to say that prayer. Will you rub my other arm a little longer?"

XIII.

It is true that Dering had made an attempt to write while on the train, as he had promised, but it is also true that he was obliged to abandon the idea, since his chirography, at no time good, was rendered entirely undecipherable by the motion of the car. He replaced note-book and pencil, and gave himself up to contemplation of the flying landscape. It was dreary, colorless, monotonous. The ragged negroes and vehicles at the tumble-down stations depressed him. One horrible, legless old woman, huddled in what appeared to be a very large, wooden bread-trough, was made radiant by all the loose silver in his pockets; and she called on heaven to bless him until the train was out of hearing-distance. As it grew darker, the squares of light from the car-

windows, flitting up and down on the uneven ground, made him dizzy. He drew down the curtain, and leaned back against the window-frame, closing his eyes. The horrible, jarring din about him actually interfered with his thoughts, so that he could scarcely recall Barbara's face as he had last seen it, sallow and pinched with grief; but he remembered finally, with a species of incredulity, that it had been lovely in spite of its yellowish tone and the great shadows under her eyes. How she had looked at him that last second! His heart gave a hot leap along his breast to his throat, leaving a fiery track behind it as of sparks. He tried to fancy her beside him: they were married; her wrap and umbrella were on the opposite seat; she had put her feet up beside his: he could fancy the very lights that would sparkle on her smart varnished boots. She would pretend to read: he fancied she would not talk much to him: in fact, people would think they were rather bored with each other. Then he would call her attention to some passing object, and, as she leaned across him to look, he would kiss the great knot of her sea-smelling hair. That would thrill her with an exquisitely delicate sense of loving and being loved: she would give the subtle, cowering shiver that he remembered, and press slightly against him as she leaned back with an expression more coldly bored and indifferent than ever. It suddenly swept over him that with each abominable rattle of that noisy train he was being whirled farther and farther away from all those delicate charms. What if she were to be ill?—to need him? What if she were ill at this very moment? What if the mettlesome steeds of Unc' Joshua were dashing in a mad run over those wretchedly rough roads? He could fancy her lying senseless in that thick gloom, with just a thin stream of blood from her temple shining out vividly. A cold sweat broke out on his own forehead.

"How far are we from Washington?" he asked the porter, who passed by at that moment.

"Be 'n Eleksandria 'n 'bout fift' minutes," replied the man, making quick flourishes over the back and arms of the opposite seat with a large feather duster.

"Thanks," said Dering.

"Kin I git yah anything, suh?" asked the porter, in tones which meant, "Won't you give me something?" but which Dering was too worried and restless to notice.

"No, thanks," he said, shortly, and then, as the man lingered, thrust his head under the still lowered curtain and kept it there until the porter had disappeared.

When they reached Washington, he took a hansom and drove directly to Wormley's, where the first thing he asked for, after securing a room, was pen and paper. He got so nervous, however, after he had written ten lines that he pushed everything aside, and, summoning a waiter, ordered another hansom to be called in an hour. This interval he devoted chiefly to a cold bath, which braced him up a good deal, and to an excellent dinner. He then plunged into the cab, after the impetuous fashion which distinguished him, ordering the bewildered cabby to drive "Anywhere."

"Anywhere, sir? How, sir? How long, sir?"

"Till I tell you to stop."

"All right, sir. Cert'n'y, sir. Ten o'clock, sir. Dollar an hour, sir."

"Yes, I know it is,"—grumpily. "And if you try to beat me for more, you'll regret it."

"Yessir. All right, sir."

Off they started,—clatter-clack, clatter-clack, b-r-r-r-r-r, clatter clack, clatter-clack, clatter-clack, b-r-r-r-r-r-r,—that inimitable sound of wheels and horses' feet on the asphalt which Dering usually found so delightful. To-night it put him in a species of fever, and he sat with his shoulders drawn up in a rebelliously surly attitude. It seemed incomprehensible and unnatural that scarce one hundred miles away the same soft rain was falling on those muddy Albemarle roads, blurring the graceful outline of the hills, and frosting Barbara's window-panes. Here, in the biting glare of electric lights, the heavy foliage of the trees took on a theatrical seeming; they appeared like shapes cut out of dingy green card-board. The figures of hurrying pedestrians reflected downward in the rain-washed pavements, and the similarly reproduced cabs with their steaming horses, reminded him of clever Indian-ink sketches by French artists. Was it possible that only a few hours ago Unc' Joshua had been driving him along a primitive Virginian turnpike, with Mr. Buzzy ensconced upon the front seat? His whole life of the past few months looked unreal to him in this winking, blue-white glare. He could not analyze any of the feelings that tormented him, being only conscious of a fierce lack, which once or twice deceived him into thinking that he was physically hungry. In the midst of these soaked and thronging streets, he was beset by an intolerable sense of unimportance; he had no acquaintances in Washington, and knew very little of the town itself, else he would have sought out some person, congenial or otherwise, with whom to pass those dreary hours of enforced waiting.

He roused suddenly and glanced about him. They were passing the White House, which looked in the electric waver like a large Christmas-card ornamented with mica and with windows of isinglass behind which lighted candles were being held. Broken gusts of chatter and music alternated with the patter of the horses' feet and the rumble of wheels; the trees more than ever resembled those of the foot-light Arcadia, and through the pale sky overhead a glittering dust seemed sifting, as though through a great sieve. He was depressed without knowing why; the very brightness and diversity of the passing scene filled him with a sense of gloom; and it was not until he had stopped the cab a moment, to bestow five dollars on a hunchbacked lad, that his spirits rose at all. These acts of unguided and munificent charity were one of Dering's panaceas against the blues: he found it cheering to remember the amazed expressions of gratitude, both facial and vocal, that were turned upon him.

When he reached his hotel again, he once more attacked the promised letter to Barbara. This was very up-hill work, as he did not know what manner of missive she expected from him, and was, moreover, wholly unused to writing love-letters. To begin it was im-

possible. "My dear Barbara" looked too cold and unnatural. "My darling" was, under the circumstances, out of the question. He compromised by starting off abruptly: "Have just arrived in Washington, and find I cannot leave until 9.15 to-morrow morning." Here he stopped and began to walk up and down the room, which was a large one and adapted to this caged-beast order of exercise. It struck him that thus far his letter was too telegraphic both in style and matter, and at the same time a brilliant idea occurred to him. Why not telegraph, merely, from Washington, and write from New York? He put this plan into execution at once, and on the next morning Barbara received the following message, which had originally been written in French, but which, owing to the intricacies of Dering's handwriting and to certain deficiencies in the education of the telegraph operator, reached her in the state below recorded:

"Se malhoornse ma faib tellemnt de mal que jetai malade pouvair pat ecire. Pe regrettig pat lee passe, ilyu trap di futilite. Rodedens. Toujooe at voue."

(No signature.)

She had been in such a nervous state all day, expecting momentarily the advent of that promised and lengthy bulletin, that the effect of this unparalleled billet-doux was to throw her into fits of genuine if somewhat frantic laughter. She screamed with merriment until large tears rolled down her face and blotted the slip of yellow paper in her hand; then, the first sense of humor having passed, she became conscious of a keen disappointment. She could not possibly hope for a letter until three days had passed, and in the mean time her only solace would be that mangled message on her lap. She gave the hopeless and helpless sigh of a woman who feels that she could make better love than her lover, and threw herself back among the white furs on her sofa, trying to imagine the words that he would say to her, rather than those which he would write.

XIV.

Dering in the mean time had reached New York, and, after an elaborate and regenerating toilet, was sauntering into the Manhattan Club to lunch *tête-à-tête* with his thoughts of Barbara. The Letter was as yet unwritten, but he felt material for it accumulating in his mind.

As he entered the dining-room, he jostled against a man who was also going in, and, turning to apologize, recognized an acquaintance who made up in charm what he lacked in youth. He was a Bostonian of the Bostonians, but this fact did not at all clash with his present whereabouts, as Bostonians seem a species of social whale that have to come up in New York to breathe. What did somewhat astound Dering, however, was the fact that Mr. Everstone Beanpoddy proposed that they should lunch together,—distinguished personages of a certain age generally preferring to partake of youthful society and Little-Neck clams at different times; and it was with an almost overwhelmed sensation that Dering seated himself in the chair opposite to Mr. Bean-

poddly, at one of the small tables. This, by the way, was the gentleman who had recommended him to select for a feminine friend a woman who had known some great sorrow, his reason for this advice being that, having known grief personally, she would be less ready than most of her sisters to inflict it on another.

"You're looking rather fagged," he now remarked, stretching his fingers among the wineglasses, as though he were about to strike a chord on some instrument and awaited the harmonious result with pleasure. "Not recovered from race-week yet?"

"I wasn't in town on race-week," said Dering, wondering if he had better answer "Washington" or "Tuxedo" to the question that he knew would follow, and vaguely curious as to the unusual mid-day genialness of Mr. Beanpoddly.

"Not in town, eh? I must have a better look at you. You are a remarkable young man. Was it from necessity or a sense of duty that you absented yourself? And if you weren't in town, where were you?"

Dering had formed his lips to pronounce the name of the Father of his Country, when Mr. Beanpoddly interrupted him.

"Ah, I remember now," said he: "you've been in Virginia. Some one told me,—some woman. You've a cousin there, haven't you?—a cousin by marriage,—young Pomfret's widow. Some one told me she was a great beauty,—another woman, too. It must be true." He glanced up here, and saw that Dering was coloring furiously.

"Ah! so that's true, too," he continued, calmly. "Another woman told me that. Your absence during race-week is quite accounted for. Am I to condole with or congratulate you?"

"Neither," said Dering, shortly, and then forced a laugh, feeling that he had shown temper.

"Then I will congratulate you on not having to condole with you. Your seedy appearance, however, is not yet accounted for." He waited a moment or two, as if expecting a reply, and then went on: "In spite of your expressive and laconic reply, my dear boy, I'm afraid that you're hard hit,—down on your luck, so to speak. I remember we had an interesting conversation on the subject of friendship between the sexes, just before you left for Virginia. I am sure that you will pardon my suspicions when you reflect on the exact correspondence of Mrs. Valentine Pomfret's personality with a bit of advice that I gave you. Let me add one thing. If any one were to ask me what I considered grief, of any kind, most nearly to resemble, I would reply by slightly misquoting the words of the Prince of Denmark,—'a mouse-trap.' If you ask why, or if you will allow me to tell you why," pursued Mr. Beanpoddly, in whom the matutinal vermouth cocktail had begun to stir the spirit of epigram, "I will say that grief is always a trap. We walk into it sometimes quite blindfold; sometimes the smell of the toasted cheese which it contains is too much for us; sometimes we get nipped by trying to help some brother mouse out. But it is always wiser, in the event of being caught, to content ourselves in the fixed compartment with such of the cheese as remains, rather than

to go whirling around in the revolving portion, rubbing our nose against the wire, exhausting ourselves, and always ending where the first evolution began. At least such is my experience."

And Mr. Beanpoddy, having delivered himself of this monologue, leaned back in his chair, over the back of which he strapped his napkin, holding an end in either hand and looking genially at Dering. The latter was making elaborate designs in his salt-cellar, and seemed absent-minded. He generally gave Mr. Beanpoddy, whom he considered a brilliant person, the whole of his attention; but on this occasion he had lost half of the other's harangue while adding to the material for The Letter, and he had just composed a rather telling sentence when the above-mentioned remark was addressed to him.

"That's my experience," repeated Mr. Beanpoddy. He lifted a glass of Tokay, squaring his lips outward as it touched them and then inward as he withdrew it, and pressing the corners of his mouth delicately with his napkin.

"Everything's a trap more or less," said Dering, pulling himself together, and answering rather at random.

"Ah! so you admit it?" replied the other, smiling. "Now, I hope, my dear fellow, that you don't consider all this tirade officious. The milk of human kindness tinged with officiousness always reminds me of the real fluid tinged with wild onion. It is doubtless just as real and genuine an article, but certainly it is very unpalatable."

"How could I think you officious, Mr. Beanpoddy?" asked Dering, with some of the petulance of a child who is awakened in a strong light.

Mr. Beanpoddy's brilliancy was bringing tears to his mind's eye, and he could not ponder on his absent lady in a glare which disclosed the very molecules that compose thought, as particles of dust are disclosed by a sunbeam. "You are only too kind to take the trouble," he added, earnestly. "I appreciate it, I do assure you."

"You are most tremendously in love," replied Mr. Beanpoddy.

He was silent a few moments, rousing himself suddenly.

"See here, my lad," he remarked: "can't you tell me something about her? Is she handsome?" A nod from Dering. "Blonde or dar——" Another nod interrupted him. "Large or——"

"She is very tall," said Dering. Then he turned desperately and faced Mr. Beanpoddy point-blank. "I do love her with every inch of me," he said. "It will seem absurd to you, of course, but I felt a sneak until I had said it."

He hesitated, rather expecting that Mr. Beanpoddy would contradict that statement concerning the absurdity of his (Dering's) condition of mind; but he did not. He played with a long light-colored cigar in his well-kept, very handsome hands, on which the veins were beginning to appear in a species of bas-relief, and merely raised one of his eyebrows slightly.

"Such statements don't sound as incredible to old chaps like myself as you youngsters imagine," he said, finally: "only it is like having lost an arm,—the sensation of hand and fingers remains with us, but we can't grasp anything with them."

To this Dering made no reply. It struck him as a profoundly sad remark, and yet he did not wish to take it too seriously, Mr. Beanpoddy having a habit like that of an April sun, of smiling suddenly on gloom which he had evoked. He here solved the difficulty by answering himself.

"It is better to have one arm at twenty than all the fifty of Briareus at fourscore," he remarked, with terse conviction, then added, with his delightful smile, which was bracketed between two curving dimples, "If I had that number of hands, my dear boy, you may be sure they would be held out to you, each with a separate blessing for you and your sweetheart." His smile here became less genial and more condensed as it were, having a quizzical compression that elongated the dimples.

"All this is even more generous than it seems," he said, moving his wineglass about, so that its gold flecks of light fell upon an old hoop-ring of small diamonds set in iron, which he wore on his right hand.

"I don't see how it could be," replied Dering, warmly. "My tongue ties itself into knots whenever I really want to express myself."

"I had designs on you," interrupted Mr. Beanpoddy. "I thought it would be very pleasant to have you for a great-nephew."

Dering once more colored furiously.

"It is I who should blush, my dear boy; but then I don't know. Providence is considered a great and successful match-maker, eh? Well, you must ask me to your wedding. I wish I could attend in the office of miracle-worker and turn the waters of Existence into wine for you. However, Love is the god who is supposed to do that, although it's generally the wine that is watered on such occasions nowadays. One decants one's whole allotted life-portion of Perrier-Jouet on that momentous morning, and the remainder is apt to become flat, or else our Hebes trip in serving it."

"But if one doesn't decant it all?" suggested Dering, shyly.

"Then the air gets compressed, and the bottles fly to pieces in one's hands," replied Mr. Beanpoddy at once. "No, no, my dear fellow, we cannot drink our wine and have it too, as runs the saying in regard to the historical doughnut. If we can merely quench thirst with what is left, we should be grateful."

"I think I'd rather famish," said Dering, curtly.

"You think so now. You don't happen to be thirsty. Passion is like the spiced feasts which used to be given by the Inquisition to certain unfortunates who were doomed to be famished. I don't fancy such individuals would have been very particular as to the excellence of any liquor which might have been offered them. Ah, my dear boy, there comes for us all a time when we echo the sentiments of the philosopher who said, 'There's no such thing as bad whiskey. Some's better than others, but it's all good.'"

Dering had a dim idea that Mr. Beanpoddy was walking upon water somewhat beyond his own depth, but which upbore him in obedience to a certain mysterious power which he wielded. He had recourse to a blunt mention of facts.

"Whiskey doesn't get flat when it's decanted," he said. "We were talking of champagne."

"Ah! that's just it," was the bland rejoinder. "One would rather drink unpleasantly fiery whiskey than unpleasantly flat champagne."

Dering was beginning to feel irritated. "I think I'd rather take my chances with the compressed air," he said, pushing out his under lip with a slightly obstinate look.

"I have known many who preferred to," replied Mr. Beanpoddy, "but when a fragment of the glass of those figurative bottles flies in one's mind's eye it affects one exactly as the bit of glass which flew into the eye of the little girl in Andersen's story of the Snow Queen. It froze her heart, you remember."

"Yes; but, if you recall the rest of the story, her sweetheart thawed it out."

Mr. Beanpoddy rose, and answered between the puffs with which he lighted a fresh cigar from the stump of the other,—

"Assuredly, my dear fellow; but if you will go a little further you will remember, also, that that feat was accomplished before marriage, not after."

XV.

This conversation with Mr. Beanpoddy had on Dering an effect irritating rather than depressing. He felt that his love had been patronized, and to a man, especially to a young man, it is infinitely more disagreeable to have his state of mind patronized than to be patronized himself.

Then, too, for the first time during their friendship, Mr. Beanpoddy's brilliancy had seemed insufficient, and when he thought of its radiance as having been turned upon Barbara he felt as though some one had turned an electric light upon a star. The distinguished Bostonian's similes seemed to him far-fetched, and his cynicism somewhat meretricious. A remark here occurred to Dering, which he wondered if he would have strength of mind enough to make to Mr. Beanpoddy when they next met. He fancied himself saying, quietly, "At least, Mr. Beanpoddy, there is one thing in which you do believe,—that is, in your unbelief."

For one fact, however, he had to thank that charming pessimist,—namely, for the indignantly rebellious mood which he had aroused, and which made *The Letter* a comparatively easy task. He tore up the stilted first two pages, which he had twice copied, and wrote the following words, in a species of panic lest they should escape him before recorded:

"——I will not begin this letter. I cannot know how you would have me begin it. I don't even know whether you expect a conventional note now. I do not think you dream of the frightful self-control I have had to exercise over myself during the last two weeks. I am glad you do not know. I can only say, over and over, I love you,—I love you. Perhaps you will think it your duty to throw this in the fire when you read those words. But for God's sake don't be afraid of my

ever forcing my love on you. I have told you, and I mean it, that everything shall be just as you say : I will write every week, or I will stop writing altogether, precisely as you may command. It is horrible here in this great whirl of life. Everything jars on me, or else I am out of tune with everything. I went to the play last night, and one of the actresses reminded me of you : her hair was just that rich, brown-red color ; and I could see your very gesture. Strange to say, she had some of the tones in your dear voice, so that when I heard them my heart seemed to jump into my mouth like a hot coal. The foot-lights became a yellow blur. I was standing with you in that frozen field ; I held you in my arms,—in my arms ; I felt your heart on me ; I felt you,—you,—*you*. If this hurts you, forgive me. Remember, I do not know much about women, or how to handle them, as it were, and you are the first for whom I have ever had even a passing fancy ; that is, in the high sense of the word, of course. God forbid I should pose to you as an Admirable Crichton ! Whenever I think of those other disturbing fancies that have starred my life with their little poisonous blossoms, I think of you as a dear gardener, who has cut out a great square of the sod on which they grew, tossed it aside, and, in the bare, torn space which it left, has planted a strong, straight, vigorous young tree,—my love for you, dear.

"I am writing this at the Club, sitting here by myself. Some rounders have just rolled down-stairs, after one of them had stuck his head in here and muttered to the rest, 'G—d ! Man in that room all *alone* !' I have had a rather hard day of it, and feel worn out, mind and body : so forgive this horrible scrawl. Your answer to this will tell me what to do.

Yours,

"J. D."

When Barbara received this letter, she was seated at a small piano which had lately been placed in her room, playing that richly sombre second movement of Chopin's Thirteenth Nocturne. Martha Ellen placed the envelope before her on the music-rack, and it fell down between her hands, making a slight discord. She withdrew her fingers from the chords which had been the delight of her husband, and opened Dering's letter ; then, having half drawn the closely-written sheets from the envelope, thrust them back, held them for a moment between her open palms, and went over in front of the wood fire.

Her heart was beating heavily, and when she again withdrew the stiff leaves they rattled against each other in her eager grasp. Once more she put them away from her, then with a quick movement turned to the signature. A certain shade, delicate but distinct, passed over her face, and she pressed her under lip outward and then close above her upper, in a gesture expressive of conviction slightly tinged with disappointment. A few moments afterwards she read the whole letter.

Its effect upon her was contradictory, and consisted of a series of varying shocks rather than of any positive impression. Its opening went to her heart : she felt her throat swell as she read it. This sentence rather chilled her, however : "I will write every week, or I will stop writing altogether, as you may command."

"He doesn't love me; he doesn't love me," she said, addressing the fire, and with a repetition of that unpleasantly convinced movement of her under lip. Again she read on, only to receive a still greater jar a few sentences further. An actress had reminded him of her!—a painted thing, with a sing-song voice and—— Ah! but here: the voice also resembled hers; the hair,—“just that rich, brown-red color.” She put the letter down on the white fur rug beside her, and buried her face in the seat of a chair near by. If a woman has handsome hair, she likes to think that its tint has never been precisely reproduced in the locks of any other woman, especially in those of a “leading lady,” who probably wears an auburn wig!

What followed proved a slight compensation, however. The fact of the foot-lights having become a “yellow blur” was sufficient evidence that he had been thinking intensely of her, even while noting these points of resemblance in that red-haired person on the stage. And when he said that he held her in his arms,—in his arms,—and felt her heart on him, and felt her,—her,—*her*,—the boyish iterance and vehemence of it thrilled and startled her.

She found herself smiling, her breath coming quickly. She lifted the paper nearer to her face.

Then came that charming, dainty bit of allegory in which he likened her to a dear gardener, and his love for her to a vigorous young tree.

Again she put down the letter and hid her face. She took it up again, touched, softened, delighted, only to receive a third jolt, as it were, against the brusque and hurried sentences with which it closed. She could see those rollicking dudes lurching down-stairs, and hear the drunken tones of amaze in which one of them had exclaimed, “G—d! Man in that room all *alone*!”

Poor Barbara, who was thoroughly morbid, overstrained, and over-excited, kneeled up, took the great chair into her embrace, and broke into a passion of sobs. They did not last very long, and ended in a fit of laughter, which was rather mirthless, although not at all hysterical. This in turn was replaced by a deep frown.

She got to her feet, leaving the letter upon the rug, and walked up and down the large room, striking her hands lightly together, now behind her, now in front of her. She stopped mechanically after a while, and took her Bible from a low table, opening it at random in that fashion which had become second nature to her. The verse upon which she put her finger ran as follows: “And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them.” She turned hastily to another place: “An end is come: the end is come. It watcheth for thee: behold, it is come.” The Bible slipped from her loosened hold upon the floor, and she sank to her knees beside it, pressing her joined hands into her lap and looking at the open book in front of her.

“It watches for me,” she said, whisperingly. “An end is come: it watches for me,—it watches. He watches me; he looks at me. He smiles to himself. I wonder if I’m going crazy? I seem to be watching myself from some high place; I seem to be outside of myself; I am as apart from myself as my gown is. Oh! if I had only one

soul to speak to, to help me!—no, not to help me,—only to be sorry with me!” She turned, still on her knees, and reached for Dering’s prayer-book, opening it at this verse: “Mine eyes long sore for thy word, saying, Oh, when wilt thou comfort me?”

“That is it! that is it!” she cried, trembling. “‘When wilt thou comfort me?’ I cannot bear it! I cannot! I cannot! But I must. What can I do? I can’t get away from it,—from myself,—from the memories—— Oh, the memories! This place is haunted. I will go away. No: what am I saying?—I came here for that; I came here to be haunted. Oh, Val, help me! help me! My God, give him back to me! give him back to me! give him back to me! I will pay for it. Oh, it was cruel—it seemed cruel! We tried to be good; we tried to help others, and to be unselfish, and to think of your will in everything—— I must be crazy. I will go out; I will go out into the air.”

As she walked along the red roads, which were lightly powdered with snow, she found an idea grow in her mind until it had become a resolve, and twenty minutes later she knocked at the door of a small frame cottage which bore the sonorous title of “The Rectory.” A child opened it for her,—a pretty thing in a brown woollen frock and white pinafore, who looked up at the tall, black-draped figure through her light-brown curls, which she pulled over her face with one hand.

“May I come in? Is Mr. Trehune at home?” said Barbara.

The child sidled about, swinging the door from side to side, and muttered something indistinctly.

“It’s very cold,” pursued Barbara, with her smile. “Mayn’t I come into the hall?”

“Yes!” burst forth the child, as though a small fire-cracker had exploded in her mouth.

Barbara stepped inside, out of reach of the bitter wind, and just as she did so Mr. Trehune himself came to the door of his study.

“Nell, you rogue——” he began, stopping short at sight of Barbara.

“Oh! may I speak to you a few moments, Mr. Trehune?” she said, moving forward. “I’m Barbara Pomfret. I am very unhappy. I thought you might say something to me.”

Trehune, who was a young man, blushed frantically, the color showing even through his light hair, which was cropped so close as to be of a silver tone.

He was tall and well put up, and had a broad, squarely-cut face, in which the mouth was the best feature, although his eyes, of a dark blue, were fine in spite of the lashes being silvery like his hair and brows. He made an awkward bow which suggested the presence of a rusty hinge in the small of his back, and opened the door of his study. On the rug before the fire were three more children, each one younger than the little girl who had opened the door. All wore brown woollen frocks and white pinafores, and, as their father re-entered, began a clamor like that of a nest of birds about to be fed. This ceased abruptly as they caught sight of Barbara.

“I’m afraid I’m interrupting you,” she said, nervously.

“Oh, not the least,—not the least,” he assured her; and catching up

the children, one on his shoulders, one under each arm, with Nell following, he went out by another door.

XVI.

When he came back he found his unexpected visitor walking up and down his little room. She turned and came instantly towards him.

"Don't be afraid, please," she said, with a smile which he thought strange: "I cry very seldom, and never before people; but something told me you could help me."

"I will try my best," he said, seriously, and they sat down on opposite sides of a small table which was covered with a red-and-white damask cloth. Barbara stretched out her arms upon it, and rested one hand on the back of the other, interlacing the fingers.

"I am so unhappy!" she said, again. "Perhaps 'tortured' is a better word. Yes,—I am tortured. May I say things to you just as they come in my mind?"

"Indeed you may," said Trehune, gently. If he had not known who she was, he would certainly have thought her unbalanced, to say the least.

"Then tell me, do you expect to meet your wife in heaven? Do you think she will know you? Do you think she knows about you now? Do you—think—she—watches you?"

Poor Trehune had turned terribly pale, and sat staring at Barbara as though she had plunged a knife into him and was amusing herself by twisting it about. Dering had entertained a similar thought of her on one occasion.

"Do you? Do you?" said Barbara. "Do you think she loves you now? Or, if she loves you, do you think it is just as a spirit might,—just as a guardian angel might? Do you think she would care if—you were to love some one else?"

He opened his lips to reply, but no sound escaped them.

"Do you think she would care, as a living woman would care, if you were to marry again? Do you think God would let her know? Do you think it would be a sin? Do you think it would be a sin? Do you think it would hurt her? Do you think she would have a—contempt for you?"

He let his arms drop heavily on the table, and, putting his head down on them, grasped at his short hair with both hands.

"I have hurt you," said Barbara, stupefiedly. "I came to you because I was hurt, and I have only hurt you. I am so sorry! Let me go. I only torture people: they cannot help me."

"No, don't go," Trehune managed to gasp. He got up and went to the window, where he remained for some moments. Barbara sat moveless, staring down at her locked hands; which still rested on the table before her.

He returned presently, and resumed his seat, the only sign of emotion being a slight twitching of his deeply-curved upper lip.

"I—I—think I can answer you now," he said, in a low voice. "Will you ask me your questions once more?"

"No, no," replied Barbara. "I was desperate. I did not see how selfish it all was. You must forgive me. Please forgive me. I don't think I am quite myself. I don't think I would have hurt you so if I had been quite myself."

"I understand; I understand perfectly," said Trehune. "I will do anything in my power for you. You asked me if—I thought—I should—meet—my wife in heaven?"

"Yes," said Barbara. She leaned towards him, ceasing to breathe, and with eyes that devoured his face.

His answer came at once, concise, distinct, assured.

"I do believe that," he replied.

"You—you mean you think you will recognize her?"

"Yes."

"As your wife?"

"Yes."

"As your *wife*?"

"Yes."

"And she will recognize you, of course?"

"Of course."

"But suppose you live to be an old, old man?"

"That is with God."

"Do you think you will love each other as you did on earth?"

"More."

"No, but do you think you will love each other *as* you did then?"

"No,—but more."

"More? More?" she said, impatiently. "Wasn't it enough? What could you want more?"

"Nothing!" he cried, with sudden passion, starting to his feet; then the dull look came back upon his face, and he dropped listlessly into his chair.

"I wish I knew how to talk to you," he said, almost piteously.

"But do you think she watches you? Do you think that?" pursued Barbara.

"I think she is near me very often," he answered, softly.

Barbara cast a hurried glance over her shoulder. "And you think you can wound her, can pain her, by your actions?"

"I think it likely," he said, with some doubt. "But I don't know. God may keep all such bitterness from those he has taken to himself. I try never to do what I think would have wounded her."

"Ah, that is it! that is it!" cried Barbara. "Then you are sure—you are *sure* that you will see her again?—her hair, her eyes, her smile, herself?—all again, just as she was, just as you remember her, just as she was when she was your wife? She will have the same ways, the same gestures of head and hand? She will speak in the same voice? You will touch her; you will feel her; she will be your own again; you will take her in your arms; she will love you; you will have her?—"

She broke off, suffocated with her rapid breathing.

Poor Trehune was staring in front of him, his face ghastly pale, his forehead drenched with perspiration. It was like being dragged backwards through a hell which he had once traversed.

"Oh," exclaimed Barbara, in a heart-broken voice, "I am making you suffer too much! I will go. Indeed you had better let me go."

"I don't mind suffering if I can help you," he stammered. "What is it that troubles you most? Do you doubt all these things that you have been asking me?"

Her answer stupefied him.

"I—almost—want to," she said, in a low voice, keeping her eyes on him. "Is that a sin?"

"You *want* to?" said Trehune.

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I do. I don't know. Don't you think it is far, far worse for a woman to marry a second time than for a man?"

"So much depends," began the poor young fellow, helplessly. "There is no sin in either case——"

"But we could never be sure that they wouldn't feel a contempt for us: could we?"

"That doesn't seem natural to me."

"What doesn't?"

"That any one whom we have loved, and who is in heaven, at peace, at rest, could feel scorn for those on earth who love them."

"Ah, yes,—for those who love them; yes. But if one stops loving them,—if one loves some one else better: what then? And afterwards—suppose—oh," she panted on, with whitening face, "suppose the other died too,—before you did,—and went there, and they—they discussed you,—talked you over to each other: what then? Could you stand that? Could any one stand that without going mad? Mr. Trehune, do you think I can be going mad? I have such terrible thoughts."

"I think you are very morbid," he said, seriously. "And you look feverish. Are you sure you are well? Was it not imprudent in you to come out in this bitter wind?"

"My head was burning so," she answered, "I felt as if the cold would help me. And then I could not seem to breathe in the house: there seemed something watching, watching, all the time. Oh, I *am* so unhappy!—I am so unhappy!"

"I wish to God I could help you," he said. "Is there no way? Can't you tell me something of what is troubling you?"

"I thought I could," she whispered, "but I can't,—I can't. I will have to go. I have distressed you enough. But you don't think they would scorn us, then?"

"No, indeed I do not."

"You are sure? You are utterly sure?"

"Absolutely sure."

"And you think that perhaps God will not let our actions pain them?"

"I think it most likely."

"And you really think that they would not have contempt for us?" Trehune lifted his eyes and looked full at her for the first time.

"We might have it for ourselves," he said, slowly.

She began to shiver from head to foot. Her teeth chattered so that she could scarcely speak.

"Then you think it is wrong to marry again?"

"It would be wrong for me. I do not say that it would be wrong for you."

"Why do you think it would be wrong for you?"

Again the passion in him broke forth:

"Because I would be a cowardly hound to marry another woman, with my heart in the grave of one who has been all to me that earth can ever be. That is why!"

She laid her face against her outstretched arm and was silent for some moments. Finally she said, in a weak voice,—

"You think it is impossible that you should ever love again?"

"I am sure of it," he replied, almost with violence.

"I was sure of it,—once," she said, gently.

There came another silence, which she again broke:

"Are you never lonely? Do you never yearn for a closer human love and sympathy than you have now?" she asked him.

"Yes, but I glory in thinking that what I am enduring is all for her sake, and that some day we will smile over it together."

"You are very, very certain," said Barbara, wistfully. "It all seems so far—so desolately cold and far—to me. It is like trying to warm one's hands at a star. And then you have your children,—her children. They must be like her in one way or another. They speak to you with her voice; they look at you with her eyes. I never had a child, you know. Look: if you were to meet another woman just like her in every way, in every line of form and face, in every gesture, in every trick of voice and smile,—a woman who was even lovelier than she had been,—would you love her?"

"That is impossible," replied Trehune.

"Never say anything is impossible," said Barbara, sharply,—“you who believe in heaven and the meeting of wives and husbands. No, forgive me: I am in such pain,—I am so unhappy. Then you prefer to lead a life of absolute loneliness and heart-hunger to defrauding her of even one thought?"

"Yes," said Trehune.

"Then you are a wonderful man," she said, in a tired voice. "I believe you; but it is wonderful,—it is wonderful."

She stood up, drawing further on her long gloves, and taking her muff from the table.

"You have much to forgive me," she said, "and I have much to thank you for. I do thank you with all my heart. If you would send the little one called Nell over to Rosemary sometimes, it would be very good of you. I have a doll's house that belonged to me as a little girl, and I understand children: I never bore them. You know I think grown people bore children far oftener than children bore them: don't you?"

"I will bring her to-morrow," answered Trehune, "if you will let me come to inquire how you are. Won't you let me walk home with you?"

"No, no, thank you very much. I would rather be alone. Do you think Nell would kiss me if you brought her in here? No, never

mind : I look so tall and big in all this black, I might frighten her I will wait until I have the doll's house as a background. Good-night. You have been so good to me. I will not forget,—ever."

She stepped out into the late and bitter afternoon, and he saw her long black veil borne out on the high wind, like a sombre pennon, as she walked across the frozen fields.

XVII.

It was on the evening of her interview with Trehune that Barbara wrote Dering the following letter :

"Do not think that I write to you in coldness. Do not think that you have all the suffering. I tell you I have sounded the blackest depths of the waters of Marah, and my feet have sunk into the mud at their bottom. I do not seem able to feel. I do not suffer while I write : I only know that I have suffered. I hope I may always have this stone in my breast instead of a heart. I am cowed utterly. I shrink from grief with every fibre of soul and body. I shrink from giving it to any one else ; but I must,—I must ! Oh, my dear, you will see that I am right, that this is the only way it all could end. You could not respect me ; I could not respect myself ; I would be always haunted by the feeling that you had a secret contempt for me. And you would have,—you would have. After the first freshness of it all was over, you would begin to think, 'If I die, I wonder who this woman will marry?' You would look at your friends and think, 'Perhaps he will be her husband some day,' or, 'Perhaps that other one.' We could not look forward to meeting after death. Why, think of the mockery of it ! the hideous, hideous horror of it ! Heaven, did I say ? Could there be a more absolute hell ? It is my idea of hell. My dear, my *dear*, it is better that you should try to forget me. Or no ! I cannot say that ; I cannot honestly wish it. Oh, God ! yesterday I was afraid I was going mad, to-day I almost wish that I were. Oh, how unnecessarily cruel all this seems ! I try so hard to be good, and to see a reason for it, but I cannot !—I cannot ! I can only crouch, and cry, with poor David, 'All thy billows and waves have gone over me.' And yet it seems even worse than that. Sometimes it comes over me like an awful earth-wave, crushing, stifling, with no crisp coolness as of water, which refreshes even while it drowns. The color and warmth are gone from life for me ; only the beauty of form remains, as in the cold naked grace of a statue. You will thank me for this some day ; and when that day comes—oh, God !—I will pray for death even more frantically than I do now. If I could only make you understand ! If I could only bring you to some comprehension of what I am enduring ! Dear, be good to me,—be gentle. You must go out of my life,—you *must* ! It would bring you only sorrow. I know how morbid all this will seem to you ; I know how you will try to convince me. But do not try : only help me ; only be good to me. Oh, if you only knew how I suffer ! Dear, I pray God to be always with you,—to love you,—to keep you ; and I pray him to teach you to understand and feel grateful to

BARBARA."

This letter, which had been misplaced by his man, was handed to Dering as he was getting into a cab on his way to look in at a bachelor dinner given by one of his friends. He put it in his breast unopened, smiling at this piece of sentiment, but pleased nevertheless every time that the stiff paper made itself felt against his flesh.

As it was three o'clock P.M. when he entered on the scene of the feast, he was not unprepared for the reception which greeted him, and bore with equanimity the process of being tripped up and sat upon by three hilarious "dudes," who afterwards stood him upon a silver tray and marched solemnly around the room, singing snatches from "Harrigan and Hart's" last masterpiece. Dering, who was jolly and absolutely good-tempered through it all, had a strange feeling that Barbara's letter was being desecrated, and made his escape as soon as possible, after assisting at a bombardment of a picture of Washington with jam tarts. He was a little astonished, on thinking it over during the drive back to his club, that the whole performance had bored him rather. He had awakened suddenly, like a man from a rapturous dream which had overtaken him on some humming summer noon while perusing the last masterpiece in the way of witty French romance,—had awakened drowsy, still thrilling from those vague yet blood-quicking experiences, to take up the dropped thread of his story, and, behold! Atropos or some as clever shear-clacker had snipped the twist! The dream had spoiled the reality. The bitten place in the forbidden fruit had become brown, leathery, unpalatable. Wasps were nibbling it, an ant or two scuttled over its sleek skin. In his dream the fruit was gold as his love's hair, and sweet as honey through and through. What he took into his mouth grew again as fair, as luscious in its accustomed place, before he had swallowed the first morsel. There were flowers and fruit on the same branch,—Spring and Summer akiss in the same season,—desire and fulfilment ever smiling into each other's untired eyes, their right hands clasped, the other two free among the leaves of that wonderful tree which grows in the blessed garden and which is called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But we must drink down the sword-flame of the angel who guards it, to enter and eat of its fruit, so being born again; having died of fire, and from fire having sprung again.

By the time that he reached the club, Dering had persuaded himself that the letter against his heart contained a summons from Barbara to return at once to Virginia. He then opened and read it. When he had taken in the last word, "Barbara," he went and deliberately lighted two or three extra gas-burners, and in this blaze of light sat down to think. An ugly, snarling expression came over his face, a sort of grin of savage distaste and pain, and he began to catch his breath nervously with a hoarse sound that was neither sobbing nor laughter, but akin to both. He sat there, without moving, for some two hours, then deliberately undressed, got into a cold bath, and went to bed. In three minutes he was sleeping heavily, from sheer exhaustion, his face, haggard with pain, turned full to the glare of the lighted burners.

The next day Barbara received this telegram :

"Letter received. Will answer it in a few days. Hope you are better."
"J. D."

And it was on the day after that she read in the *Herald* the following notice:

"A most serious and possibly fatal accident occurred to-day on Broadway. A portion of some scaffolding fell upon the head and shoulders of Mr. John Dering, bruising and cutting him severely. He was at once taken to his club, having no residence in town, but is reported dangerously ill, and his mother, who is now at Cannes for her health, has been cabled for."

Barbara rang at once for Rameses.

"I want a man to go immediately with this telegram," she said, in a clear, slightly loud voice, signing the wire as she spoke. It ran to this effect:

"Shall I come to you? Can leave this afternoon's train.

"B."

After some agonizing hours of suspense, she received this answer.

"It was my cousin who was hurt. Fortunately, got your telegram while I was there. Thanks so much. I write at once.

"J. D."

"Wait!" cried Barbara to Rameses, who was leaving the room. "This must go too. Send some one else. They must go now,—this moment,—before it gets too dark."

She snatched up a bit of paper, and wrote, with scrawling eagerness,—

"Then come to me!"

(No signature.)

She sat down to the piano and played a wild, whirling waltz of Chopin, stopping now and then to laugh hysterically with her cheek against her hands on the music-rack. She paced the room, singing snatches of frenzied Polish folk-songs. Her color rose, and her heavy hair, loosening from its ridgy coil, swung far below her waist. She smiled looking down as the hair-pins fell on the carpet in her swaying walk.

"They say one's sweetheart thinks of one when one's hair-pins fall out," she said, aloud.

Suddenly she paused, and stood still in the centre of the great room. Only her glittering eyes laughed from her grave face. Then her lids dropped; she seemed to grow into marble, as Galatea grew from marble into flesh.

After a while she rang the bell again for Rameses: "I wish my things taken out of this room,—everything. You can put them in the little room over the west wing, where I used to stay, years ago. Begin now."

When this devastation was complete, and not even her dressing-gown remained to give an air of individuality to the little brass bed, she turned and sent that long, slow gaze about her which she had bestowed on the room and its contents during the evening of her arrival.

She shivered, holding a shoulder in either hand and pressing her crossed arms closely to her.

"It looks like a corpse that—has—been—robbed," she said, whisperingly, and pausing between each word. "It looks horrible! It looks horrible,—horrible!"

She then went out into the hall, and returned with the same mass of white satin and tulle beside which she had watched on that bitter night, not long ago, closing and locking the door after her. The day had been spring-like, and there had been no fire lighted in the large fireplace, but she seemed to be suddenly chilly, for she went and kneeled down upon the hearth, taking some splinters of dry wood which lay in a wicker basket near by, and placing them as though for kindling. As she did this, she glanced restlessly over her shoulder once or twice, then rose, and, lifting the mass of drapery, laid it upon the blazing bits of wood. It caught smoulderingly in one or two places, scorched and shrivelled, but died out in those clustering sparks which children delight to call "people going into church." Then, stooping forward, she blew upon it after the manner of Rameses; but this produced no effect, beyond making her eyes smart with the smoke-puffs which rushed out into her face. She became excited, nervous, pouring a box of matches out into the dimly-gleaming folds and throwing a lighted match among them. Still they only smouldered dully; whereupon she began to look eagerly around for paper of any kind.

Every available scrap was thrust into the fireplace, and the fresh bits of light-wood which she began to place here and there burned cheerily. Still the thick satin only curled and shrivelled like a thing in pain.

Barbara pulled open the doors of her desk, and seized upon any inflammable thing which came to hand; and it was at this moment that her eye fell upon a large, brass-bound box of oak which stood far under the low table. She dragged it out, panting in her excitement and suspense. It was full of letters, yellowish in tone and addressed in faded brown ink, and as she looked at them a strange expression came into her face,—an expression of grief, of fright, of resolve.

She took a great mass of them in her arms and approached the fire, afterwards tearing them from their envelopes and crumpling them so that they would ignite more quickly.

"All at once,—all at once!" she kept whispering to herself, with the insistent iteration of a person in delirium. She went back and forth to the heavy box seven or eight times. There was a great blaze now in the throat of the wide chimney; the light tulle whizzed in flakes of fire up its black maw, and the satin began to flame in places and to rise and fall with the heat, as though panting with a weird life.

"All at once,—all at once,—everything,—everything!" whispered Barbara, as though to encourage it. She kneeled and looked on with distended eyes, pushing every now and then another letter among the

writhing folds. Lastly she took the miniature which she always wore from her throat, and laid it face down upon the mass.

"Good-by," she said, in a clear voice, moving backward to the door, but keeping her eyes upon that strangely-warmed hearth-stone.

"Good-by,—good-by,—good-by," she kept repeating, in an expressionless tone. She unlocked the door, withdrew the key, and, passing out, relocked it on the other side.

XVIII.

Dering's reply came early the next morning :

"Expect me to-morrow *via* Charlottesville." (No signature.)

Late in the afternoon Barbara put on her girlhood's walking-dress, and, taking Rameses with her, started off for a walk,—or, rather one should say, a run. She flew over the frozen ground, laughing, stumbling, catching her feet in knotted brambles. Poor Martha Ellen, whose hand she grasped, panted along as best she might, also laughing hysterically, the yellowish glow in the west catching the exhausted roll of her white eye-globes.

"I feel like a little girl, Rameses!" said Barbara.

"You sut'n'y kin run like one!" replied Rameses.

"Yes, I can run!—I can run!" gasped her mistress, merrily. "Why do you drag so? Here's the hill where we used to go blackberrying when we were children. We used to wear pink tissue-paper court trains and paint our faces with poke-berries: don't you remember? Tra-la-la! tra-la-la! Keep up,—keep up, you monkey! You're dragging me back all the time! Ugh! it's cold! Do you ever wish you were a little girl again, Ramie?"

Poor Rameses was past replying.

A rich purple-blue dusk had sunk down over the land, and the gleam of the frozen ice-pond in a far field shone desolately forth from tangled patches of orange-colored wild grass. They could hardly see the tone of the dark-red soil beneath their feet.

"Faster! faster, you goblin!" urged Barbara; but Rameses, desperate with fatigue, snatched away her hand, and her mistress dashed on without her.

She came in about half an hour later, flushed, brilliant, to find the small room over the west wing glittering with wax candles, and the curtains, of old green silk splashed with large cabbage-roses, drawn over the narrow windows. Throwing her dog-whip and gloves on the bed, she went whistling out into the narrow corridor that led to this room, and, with a candle on the floor, searched in some closets which lined the walls on either side. She went back and forth, carrying several armfuls of different fabrics to her room and tossing them on chairs and sofa.

This room was delightful,—small, square, with a low ceiling ornamented in white plaster-work, its walls wainscoted in oak within three feet of the ceiling, wherefrom hung old stone engravings, washily tinted,

of girls and rabbits, girls and doves, girls and kittens in baskets, girls and young partridges, all dressed in scant white gowns, their unique figures apparently held together with difficulty by tight bands of bright-blue ribbon. A low toilet-table of French gilt, with a large mirror framed in gilt grapes and Cupids, stood between the two windows, and the six candles in the sconces on either side sent clear cross-lights upon the face and form of Barbara, as she stood before it, twisting up the long masses of her hair into a half-curled knot at the back of her fine head.

In twenty minutes Dering would arrive. Her windows overlooked the gravelled carriage-drive, and the first sound of wheels would reach her ears. She selected from the many dresses on the sofa one of rich, peach-bloom-colored Indian silk, a sort of tea-gown, half loose, half tight, through whose folds the lines of her full figure appeared and disappeared with every movement. From her fingers she slipped every ring, holding up her long hands and shaking them about to make them whiter. The wide sleeves fell back, showing her arms, which were smooth as those of a child warm with sleep. She laughed and kissed them, first one, then the other, still shaking her hands lightly above her head.

Then came a sound of wheels. In a moment she was out in the darkness of the narrow corridor. She felt as though the floor rose beneath her feet and pressed her against the slanting roof. She could scarcely breathe, and the air seemed stifling. In a sort of panic she reached the great hall, and shrunk down shivering in a corner of the stairway, where she could hear Dering's voice in the hall, the greetings and exclamations of Miss Fridiswig, and the whimpering of the greyhounds. She waited there until she heard him close the door of his room, when she rose and half-way descended the stairs, rushing back again to her coigne of vantage as she heard some one approaching. The two greyhounds found her out, and crouched down beside her, licking at her handsome bare throat and ringless hands, while the sleet rattled intermittently against the small panes in a narrow window just over her head, and she could hear Dering moving about in his room, which was near the foot of the stairs. Presently she stole down and into a long apartment on the opposite side of the hall. It was hung in yellow silk, and its polished oak floor was strewn with rugs in dull blues and orange tones on a white ground. There were many low lounging-chairs, and divans heaped with differently-colored cushions, and the light of the wood fire licked the glaze on much very beautiful china. She threw herself into a drift of crimson pillows, and let her hands fall palm to palm between her knees, brooding upon the broken fire, whose lilac flames palpitated over a bed of gold-veined coals.

It was not long before the door opened to admit Dering, who entered, closing it carefully behind him, and approached the fire with palms outstretched.

"You must be nearly frozen," said Barbara, with originality.

"Yes, I am," admitted Dering, also with a strong flavor of the same element.

"Have you had some tea? I ordered some to be arranged for you in the dining-room."

"Yes, thanks. I have had several cups. Miss Fridiswig kindly poured them out for me."

"Is it quite warm enough in here for you?"

"Oh, quite, thanks. It's wonderful how you keep this old house so comfortable."

"Yes, isn't it? But it *is* quite comfortable, I think. One can't say that of many Virginia country houses. Do sit down. You look as though you were just going away."

"I'm not, however."

"Then sit down. You make me nervous. It must be dreadfully stormy in New York, isn't it?"

"Very. You know it's snowing now outside."

"Sleeting, isn't it?"

"Both, I think."

Suddenly Dering turned, leaning over the arm of his chair, and resting both hands on the arm of hers. She could see his lips quivering, and the dilation of fiery eyes and nostrils.

"Barbara, you sent for me," he said.

"Yes, I did," she answered, not shrinking, with her eyes full on his.

"What for?" he went on.

"For—this!" she said, in a whisper more stirring than any tone of voice, and, throwing herself on her knees in front of him, held out to him her bare and beautiful arms.

"Hush! Wait," said Dering: "let me think. Don't move: let me think." He drew away from her, breathing brokenly, with an expression of keen pain on his face, and they crouched thus for some moments, gazing at each other like two tigers about to spring.

All at once he stooped forward, and, standing erect, lifted her from her feet upon his breast.

"You love me?—you love me, then, my tigress?"

"I love you."

"You are sure of yourself? You are sure of yourself?"

"Yes, yes."

"No, you are not sure; you cannot be. After that letter,—good God!—that damnable letter!—how can *I* be sure, after that letter?"

"But *I* am sure; *I* am sure."

"You are changed, you mean. You may change again. How can I tell? No! I see it as clearly—— Here! listen, you wild thing!—take your hand from my mouth. Ah, you tigress!—you tigress! No. Here—stop!—listen!—*listen*. You read that thing in the *Herald* about Jack Dering, and you thought at first that it was me, and your pity got the better of—— No! stop, I say! You've got to listen. There, I'm sorry if I hurt you, but you must listen. How beautiful you are!—what hair! what eyes! what lips! But I will speak,—do you hear? I am stronger than you; I am your master: I will speak. It was pity——"

"Jock! kiss me!"

"It was pity. You were sorry for that cruel letter. You were——"

"Jock! kiss me!"

"You thought you would atone. Oh, I know some few things about women. There, you must keep still until I finish. I want you to understand that I loathe your pity,—I abominate it! Is that plain enough? I would rather——"

"Jock! kiss me!"

"I would rather go away this moment, and never see you again in this world or the next, than compromise on pity! I tell you I——"

"Kiss me!"

"I would rather——"

"Kiss me!"

"I would rather see you belong to some one else than——"

"Kiss me! Kiss me!"

"Than take one iota less love than I give. I——"

"Ah, kiss me, Jock!"

"I will have my love returned in full,—in *full*,—do you understand? I am as proud as the devil, and unless you——"

"I love you more than anything I have ever dreamed of,—more than anything in earth or heaven,—more than anything alive or dead,—or *dead*! You understand? Now kiss me!"

He released her pliant waist and lifted her face to him with both hands.

XIX.

After this interview followed a week of delight such as is sometimes granted to two mortals, one of whom obtains a love long fought for, one of whom yields to a love long fought against. Into the winter of their discontent had stolen a mood as warmly exquisite as were the spring-like days which interrupted the actual winter weather, and which inveigled the lilac-buds into swelling forth prematurely, and filled the tops of the horse-chestnuts and peach-trees with fragile, rose-hued blossoms.

Barbara ceased altogether from that morbid habit of analysis which is the curse of our century, and gave herself without questioning into the outstretched arms of her sudden happiness. These nowadays analysts remind me of nothing so much as were a man who hears a bird sing on the branch of a fruit-tree in flower to go out and break away the branch, hoping to get a nearer view of the singer. The bird flies, and the blossoms are never fruit. The man has the fact, the dead, fruitless branch, in his hand, but that which made its beauty, the blossoms scattered, and the sweet-voiced, winged thing, are beyond the reach of his scalpel.

Dering, who had wooed one woman, found that he had won twenty. To-day she was a girl in her teens hanging her head beneath the first kisses of her first lover, to-morrow she was a laughing witch who wanted neither kisses nor lover, only a sympathetic comrade who would appreciate her vagaries, which were sometimes most unexpected, but always charming. One morning she would come to him grave-eyed, subdued, to speak with a certain awe of their future together, the same afternoon she would forbid any allusion save to the present, and in the evening tolerate no mention of either, demanding Othello-like anecdotes over which she would become breathless and excited, kneeling beside

him and looking up with eyes gloriously dark. Her variety of beauty bewildered him. Her very coloring, and the shade of her hair, appeared to change with each mood and costume, so that one day he seemed affianced to an Eastern houri languid in rich embroideries among many cushions, and the next followed a modern Atalanta through the brown vistas of her familiar woods. He never knew whether his caresses would be repulsed or accepted,—whether his remarks would be received with tears or with laughter,—whether she would comprehend divinely his half-spoken thoughts or wilfully misconstrue his most carefully worded expressions.

Barbara was in a state of the most feverish exhilaration. She scarcely slept. When she was alone she sang or whistled like a boy, to drown the voices which clamored within her. When she was particularly sleepless, she read books which Dering had marked, or wrote long notes to him, which Rameses placed on his pillow before he awoke, and which he answered before dressing.

The reaction came, however, although she fought doggedly against it, and would not admit its presence even when it gripped her by the heart-strings. Naturally enough, it was occasioned by a sudden recognizance of the likeness between Dering and her husband. As the just-accepted lover developed into the lover at his ease, gestures, expressions, and habits thrust upon her with pitiless exactitude the memory of her first wooing. All this impressed her with that novelty which is sometimes attendant upon an old fact suddenly mentioned to another person. He had for her the identical love-words to which her virginal heart had thrilled in the days gone; his caresses were the same; his half-laughing, half-serious allusions to himself as a married man,—even his kisses, and his tempestuous way of lifting her from her feet upon his breast. And yet he himself—he the man, the individual—was absolutely different,—more masterful, more imperious, more intolerant of many things. She felt like the assistant in a murder, whose accomplice addressed her always, with ghastly mockery, in the tones and manner of their victim. She could not escape; there was no possible way of egress from this labyrinth into which she had wandered with open eyes, for the clue had dropped from her hands when she raised them to clasp the throat of her new lover.

One morning, as he was romping with the greyhounds upon the lawn, waiting for her to appear, she rushed out towards him, her hair half loose in the soft wind, which smelled of young leaves and the wool of some sheep that were cropping the withered grass under the acacias. Her face was pulsing with color, her eyes bright and eager as those of a dog that foresees a walk.

“I have such an idea!” she cried, taking his arm into her ungloved hands and pressing against his side. “We have never been on a straw-stack together. Let us go. Let us run all the way. There is such a beauty in the mill-field! And it has been dry and warm so long, it will be so nice to slide upon. It is so pretty there; and we can hear the mill-wheel: Aunt Caroline is having some flour ground for brown-bread to-day.”

They ran, laughing and teasing one another like two children, along

the broad red road that curved beyond the back of the house, overhung by great catalpa and black-walnut trees, and hemmed in by an unusually eccentric snake fence. The hills showed a faint green bloom here and there along their sides, and the young apple-trees in the new orchard held out now and then a silvery small leaf. They reached the straw-stack, and began to scramble up, arriving at the top panting and covered with dust and bits of straw. She sank into the arms which he held out for her, and, pressing down the collar of his silk shirt, rested her wordless lips in the hollow at the base of his strong throat.

"I love you,—I love you," said each, clinging to the other; and then she settled contentedly down, with her head against his knees, and let one of the greyhound pups curl up between her languid, outstretched arms.

"Suppose Mr. Beanpoddy could see you now!" she said, after some moments of this delicious inertia, "or some of your dude friends! I would like to see the puppies attack their spatts. Do you suppose anything ever smelled quite as nice as a straw-stack?"

"Yes,—your hair does. What do you put on it?"

"Soap and water."

"Oh, Barbara! do you want me to believe all this is only due to Pears and your cistern?"

"Indeed, indeed I don't perfume my hair, Jock. I think it's so vulgar. I *hope* it doesn't smell like that!"

"Like what?"

"As though it were all horrid and Lubin's-Extracty."

"That is as original a compound verb as the one Punch's little girl made use of a year ago."

"Oh, yes, I know,—the one about Liebig's-Extract-of-Beefing it. Jock, I think it would be so charming to slide down here together."

"Do you? Well——"

They began their descent, first sedately, then in a whirling rush which landed them under an avalanche of loose straw.

"Isn't—it—fun!" she gasped, as they climbed up again.

"Your hair's down. Lord! how long it is! I could tie you to me with it. Look here."

He divided the heavy masses and drew them about his throat, then released her, horrified at the sudden whiteness of her face.

"Barbara! what's the matter?"

"Nothing,—I,—nothing,—nothing at all."

"That's absolute nonsense, my dear. You know you really can't put me off in that absurd way. Barbara——" He paused, a sudden look of intelligence creeping over his face. "See here, Barbara: I've thought something once or twice. Are you trying to fancy that I'm Valentine Pomfret?"

At this she turned on him a look so full of reproach, anguish, and entreaty that he was frozen with a sense of his brutality.

"Barbara, forgive me!" he said, reaching out for her; but she held him away, with her open hand.

"It was so cruel!" she managed to whisper at last, with chattering teeth.

"My God! I know it was! Can you forgive me?"

She withdrew her hand, and began pressing it with short convulsive movements upon the other.

"Can't you forgive me?" said poor Dering.

Still she sat wordless, her handsome throat swelling with some repressed feeling.

"I—I—have tried to think that," she said, after a while.

Dering's face changed.

"You have?" he said, in a low voice.

"Yes, but—I—could not. I found—I——" She stopped a moment, and then went on, looking steadily at him, "I found I did not want to."

"Barbara!"

"I did not want to think of you as any one else. I did not want any one else. I wanted you." She paused again, adding, in a whisper, "I want you."

He took her in his arms, and she felt the great throbs of his heart against her face.

"I want you!—I want you!" she went on, incoherently,—"*forever, —forever,—forever!* Only you! Oh, Jock, if you—if you die, you know I will be true to *you?* Hush! don't answer. How can you know? My God! how can you know?"

"I do know," said Dering, stoutly, braced by the belief which sustains every lover,—the belief that the woman who loves him loves him more, and better, and differently from the way in which she has ever loved or ever will love any man again.

"I do know, my darling," he repeated; but she sobbed on, clinging to him: "No, no! you cannot! you cannot! And I—I can never prove it to you!"

"I would not have a proof. I do not want one. I would not accept it if you could give it to me. I wish I could make you understand how thoroughly I comprehend all your struggles and feelings. But you must not think that you only suffer."

"It is because I grieve you that I suffer," she replied, still hiding her face. "All the little pleasure that I have given you cannot pay for the pain. You think I don't know that; but, oh, I do!—I do!"

"You only give me pain when you speak in this way," said Dering, caressing her bowed head. "You only give me pain when you think that you are anything but a joy, a blessing to me,—the very light of my life. I not only love you, I actually adore you! Why, I swore once that, no matter what a woman was to me, I would never kiss her feet; and look here! and here!" And, before she could prevent him, he had stooped and pressed his lips, now on one foot, now on the other; then, kneeling up, he kissed her dress, her knees, her waist, her arms, while she bent over him, panting, intoxicated, half reassured.

It was in some such way that nearly all their misunderstandings ended.

XX.

It was quite late on an afternoon of the next week that a sudden heavy shower overtook them while out riding. As they were near the

pretty, Gothic church of the neighborhood, they fastened their horses and took shelter within its doors, which they found open. After about twenty minutes of ceaseless downpour, Dering insisted on remounting his horse and riding back to Rosemary for a trap of some kind, and thus Barbara was left to a possible hour of rather dreary waiting. She became tired of her post on an old oak settle near the open doors, and wandered up into the organ-loft. It was gray with cobwebs and littered with melancholy bits of bread soaked in strychnine, which had been left there for the delectation of the rats. She found the organ unlocked, and thought she would see if she could get the sexton to pump for her, so went cautiously down the crooked and dusty stairway, wondering at the sudden darkness which enveloped it, to find the church doors closed. Her heart leaped violently, then settled into heavy beating, and, looking back into the darkening church, she felt with both hands for the fastening. It was secure, and from the outside. Barbara, who had from her childhood entertained an especial horror of being locked into even a bright and daylighted room, felt a cold horror, as strong as it was unreasoning, creep up within her. She ran hurriedly out into the aisle of the church, which was not so gloomy as that little passage near the door, and stood still, with her hand on the back of one of the pews, trying to think what she had best do. It was not long before she remembered that through the vestry-room she might make her escape, and, hurrying forward, found the entrance to it also locked.

The rain was now falling more heavily than ever, and sheets of bluish lightning threw into pale relief the tall windows, with their lead-framed panes of glass, showed her the large black letters on the three white marble tablets over the altar, but failed to penetrate the arches of the vaulted roof, from which the gloom seemed to hang like dust-clogged cobwebs.

"I will be quite quiet, I will be quite collected," she said to herself. "I will go in my pew and sit down. Perhaps I will fall asleep, and then Jock will come and laugh at me, and we will have such a gay, cosey drive home together." There were other thoughts which came huddling about her, whimpering for admittance, and which, when refused, threatened with ugly grins and cries of rage. "I will be quite quiet,—quite calm," she repeated, this time aloud. "I will take this prayer-book in my hands and kneel down,—and then I will count a hundred; and by that time Jock will come." She kneeled down, resting her forehead on the large, old-fashioned prayer-book, and listening to the gushing of the rain from the sloping roof.

The lightning increased, grew sharper in its darts, and was now followed by low thunder. All at once a noise attracted her,—a rattling at the church doors. Starting up, she ran down the long aisle, dragging over a foot-bench in her haste, but undeterred by its echoing crash.

"It's me—it's Barbara, Jock. Open, quick!"

A renewed rattling was her only answer, followed by a long, plaintive whine from the dog outside that was scratching for admittance. This unexpected reply so startled her that she could not repress a broken cry, and rushed back again into the body of the church, invol-

untarily lifting her hands to her ears as she ran. A beseeching and heart-broken howl from the lonely dog followed her, its quavering fall absorbed in a ponderous roll of thunder which jarred along under her feet. Then came a heavier rush of rain, and the sound of a wind rousing itself along the sodden leaf-carpet outside. Only the general outlines of the reading-desks and the great tablets were now to be discerned, save in the flickers of lightning which seemed to soak with an unnatural gleam all objects upon which they fell. Again the dog howled, and again the thunder drowned its long note.

"He is nearly here now," said Barbara, who was again seated in her own pew. "He is just driving through Machunk Creek. Now he is coming up the long hill. Now he has turned into the lane. Now he is coming into the church-yard. Now——"

She was here startled by the baffled dog, who leaped up at the window near which she was sitting, hung by its paws on the ledge for a moment, and then dropped whining back upon the ground without. The sight of that dark head and those clutching paws horrified her inexpressibly, and she rushed and crouched down on the altar steps, trembling in every fibre. The next lightning-flare that swept the church fixed the great letters on the white tablets upon her inner lids, and thrust upon her a memory against which she had been fighting ever since finding herself locked in, and which coursed backward through her veins as though ice-water had been injected into them.

The last time that she had followed the outlines of those sombre characters, she had been standing before this altar as a bride. She could see the whole scene as distinctly as though she were at the very moment playing her part in it,—could see the kindly, earnest face of the minister who had married them, even to a wart upon one of his nostrils, and a curious habit he had of drawing his large chin into folds,—could see her father's face, with its anxious expression and softly-curling gray hair, through which the morning light shone whitely, and which contrasted so well with his fresh and wind-reddened skin,—saw her husband's hand as it held her own (she had not looked at his face during the ceremony),—saw the little rip in one of her lace flounces, where it had caught in the carriage door,—heard the voice of the man who had been her husband,—a voice rich and earnest and unusual,—*"I Valentine take thee Barbara to my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part."* Ah! she heard more. She felt him lean to her when they had stepped into the carriage and were out of sight and hearing of all others,—felt the very breath of his words against her cheek:

"Death will not part us, Barbara. We will laugh in his face, my Barbara,—my wife,—my Barbara,—my brave girl. What is Death to Love? It will be only a little, lonely waiting for whichever of us goes first. He cannot part us, sweetheart; he cannot part us."

She thought she heard his voice close at her ear:

"Death cannot part us, Barbara."

"Now he is coming through the double gate," she said, aloud. "Now he's driving very fast over that good bit of road. Now he's

turning into the Greysons' field. Now he is coming up the church hill. Now he is turning in at the gate."

The dog under the window howled again, and again the voice at her ear seemed to say, as though to cheer her,—

"Death cannot part us, Barbara."

She kneeled up, grasping the altar rail with both hands, and making a tremendous effort at self-control. "Dear God, please take care of me, and bless me, and be good to me," she said, in the childish voice which came to her whenever she was suffering. "I have not done any one any harm. I have tried to be good. Please ask Val to forgive me. He does not care for me as a wife any longer. Please ask him to think of me kindly. Please make him think of me kindly. Please make him forget about me. Please, if I have done wrong, forgive me. Don't let these thoughts come to me any more, and let Jock come soon. And don't let me have to wait here very long. And please be good to me, and show me how to be good." She was rambling on, comforted by the mere sound of the words which she uttered, but when she paused to take breath she heard more distinctly than ever those words, "Death cannot part us, Barbara."

"Oh, please, Val!—oh, please, Val!" she began, piteously. "Oh, God, don't let him be angry with me,—for Christ's sake! Oh, Val, it was so lonely! I would forgive *you*. I would want *you* to be happy. We will all love each other in heaven, in a different way. It was so lonely,—oh, it was so lonely! You don't know how I missed everything: I had to drink my tea all alone, and it was so dreadful in the dark nights; and I thought of you, and thought of you, until my heart seemed bursting. You don't know how I longed for you, Val. I used to pray you to come to me,—you must have heard me,—and you never came until now,—until now when it seems so dreadful. I wish you would ask God to let me die. I wish you would try not to hate me, Val. He looked so like you—no, that isn't honest, because afterwards I—— No! no! Don't say it any more, Val! don't say it any more! I will be good. Will you take me back? Oh, Val, Val! I cannot do it! I cannot marry any one else! I'm not such a bad woman as you think! I can't do that. I couldn't help wanting to, but I can help doing it,—I can help doing it. If you will only come to me sometimes! It was so lonely! I'm afraid of the dark. I missed you so,—I was so lonely,—all the time, all the time! I won't marry him, Val. If you'll only forgive me and take me back—no, if you'll only forgive me—I'll do it if you'll only forgive me. Indeed I will! Indeed I will! Please, Val, don't think I really meant to marry him. I never really meant to marry him. I thought I did, but I couldn't have in the bottom of my heart. Oh, I was so wicked even to think of it! But you remember how I felt at first. Oh, I hated myself!—I hated myself! I tried so hard—oh, I did try,—I did try. It was because he looked like you at first. He looked so like you, I thought it was you at first; I thought you had come back. I have been so wicked!—so wicked! But I will stop. I will be good. Please, Val!—please, Val! Please, God, don't let him laugh at me. Oh, Val, don't laugh at me!——"

When Dering at first stooped over her, as she lay, face down, along the altar steps, he thought that she was dead.

XXI.

Barbara was unconscious for several hours, and when she at last came to her senses her first rational wish was to see Dering. Although it was then midnight, she insisted upon being helped into the room where she had received him on the evening of his arrival, her rich hair hanging down over her dressing-gown of white silk, and straying here and there among the bluish-gray fur with which it was trimmed, like thin veins of fire through curling ashes. Her face was very pale, her eyes dark, wide, with unflickering lids spread above them as though held in place by the slightly-lifted eyebrows. Dering came and knelt gently and dumbly beside her, attempting to lift the loosened hands which lay along her lap. She withdrew them slowly, and clasped them together below her breast.

"Perhaps I worry you," he said, alarmed at the dreadful unvaryingness of her attitude and expression. "Suppose we don't try to talk to-night?"

"We must talk to-night," she said, dully.

"But, dearest, we can say everything just as well to-morrow. Let me help you up-stairs."

"There won't be any to-morrow," she answered, still in the same dull voice.

Dering tried again to take her hands. "My poor darling! what an awful shock you must have had!"

"It was very dreadful," she said.

"My poor love! I know it was! Won't you give me your hands, darling? I want to hold them and warm them. You look so cold!"

"Yes,—that is it: I am so cold. Wait: you may have one of my hands,—the left one. Wait a minute,—until I find——" she was groping with tremulous fingers in the breast of her gown. "Here it is," she said, finally, and held out to him her open palm, on which lay a plain gold ring.

"What is it? What is this? What must I do?" said Dering, startled. "What ring is it?"

"I want you to put it on. It is my wedding-ring."

"Barbara! Good God! my dear girl, what do you mean? I'm afraid you are awfully ill. Let me call some one. For God's sake, do, there's a good child!"

She motioned him to come back. "Don't call any one. I am not ill. I know exactly what I am doing. That is my wedding-ring. I took it off. You must put it on again; you must!" she said, with the first note of a rising excitement in her voice.

Dering was very white, and he set his teeth until his ears sang.

"I think you very ill," he answered, at length, in a controlled voice. "I do not know what you mean."

"But I do!" she cried, half rising; "I do! God has told me: he told me in those awful hours in the church,—when you did not come to me!—when you did not come to me!"

"I came as soon as I could. It was pitch-dark, and the roads like rivers. Barbara, you break my heart when you speak to me like this!"

She looked at him, relapsing once more into her first stolidity of voice and manner:

"Hearts don't break. That is what you would call a—'a chest-nut.'" She did not smile, and continued to look seriously up at him, the ring still lying on her relaxed palm. He had a horrible revulsion of feeling, and felt his mouth beginning to twist into that strangely distorted grin which characterized him in moments of violent emotion. He turned away, pretending to arrange a fold in one of the rugs.

"It strikes me as almost coarse, the use of such an expression at such a time," he said, finally, in rather a hard voice.

"Does it? Does it?" she said, a little curiously. "You know I told you I was coarse once——"

"Barbara!" was all that he could reply.

"I do think I have been honest," she went on. "I told you word for word how I felt about Val,—how I could not forget him. I told you how he haunted me. I told you we could never be happy. Women cannot forget, even if they want to,—at least, not women like me. I think I must be an awful thing,—an unnatural thing. I sometimes wonder if God made me for an experiment: only that couldn't be if he knows everything beforehand, could it? No, please don't stop me; I feel as if I could say it all now, better than I ever could again. I saw everything this evening in the church. I was so frightened! He spoke to me. I know what I must do. I see how wicked I have been. I have been coarse: it is wicked for a woman to be coarse. I don't see how you could have wanted me. I was his—I was his first—I was his wife. I couldn't be your wife too. I couldn't forget. I burned up my wedding-dress and his picture, but something made me keep my ring. I know now what made me keep it. I have been very wicked. I know you will hate me,—you look at me so horribly. Somehow I am not afraid: I will never be afraid of anything again; I will never be——"

Dering leaned over, seized her firmly by the wrists, and pulled her to her feet. Her wedding-ring struck sharply on the polished floor between them.

"If you are not mad," he said, slowly, "you are the most unutterably cruel creature I ever imagined." But his words seemed not to impress her. She swayed about in his fierce hold, peering from side to side for the fallen ring.

"I must not lose that! It's all I have," she said. "Won't you let me go, just until I find it?"

He threw her from him with an inarticulate cry, all the more savage for being smothered. He felt at that moment that he did hate her, and the firelight on her long red hair seemed a baleful and odious thing as it glistened and moved, with the lithe curves of her figure, while she crawled about, looking for her lost ring.

"I can't find it!" she said at last, gazing helplessly up at him, and kneeling back on her heels, with her hands twisted nervously together

between her knees. "That's gone too! I haven't anything left! I think God might let me die!"

"Perhaps he thinks you might change your mind after you were dead," suggested Dering, savagely.

But her only answer was to go on groping helplessly about, murmuring from time to time, "I can't find it! I can't find it! and it's all I have!"

"Barbara," he said, after some moments of silent waiting, "I wish to understand you thoroughly. You wish me to go away? You wish everything to be ended between us?"

"I don't wish anything," she answered, shaking her head with brows drawn piteously upward. "I am only trying to do what is right."

"Do you think it is right to ruin a man's whole life through sheer morbidity?"

"Oh, you don't know how I feel! You can't know how I feel! He said death could not separate us; and it can't! Why, I have been his wife,—his *wife*!"

"Don't you suppose I know that?" said Dering, fiercely. "How many times do you suppose that has come to me? Good God! are women human, I wonder?"

"I meant to do right," she faltered, great tears springing to her eyes. "You don't know how dreadful it is to remember that you have been one man's wife, when you are thinking of being another's. I think God has been very cruel to me. Oh, he has! he has!"

"And what do you think he has been to me?" said Dering, grinning; then, with a strong motion of his arm, as though flinging something hampering from him, "No! I'll be d——d if I'll shift it all on Providence! What do you think *you* have been to me?"

"A curse," she whispered, nodding her head sagaciously in a way that struck him as horrible. "Yes, I know I've been a curse to you. But I've never been your wife; and then men forget. You are so young. Just think how dreadful it would have been for me to marry you, and then for you to have found—out—this!"

"Yes, I think it would have been rather unpleasant," he admitted. Great drops stood on his forehead and under his eyes, but his voice and manner were very quiet.

"You see, everything can be worse," she said. "When people used to say that, it sounded so meaningless to me, as if it were cant; but it is so true. If I had married you it would have been ten thousand times worse."

"And yet you said you loved me!" he burst forth, in a sort of rage.

"And I did! I did! You don't think I didn't?" she said, pausing in her re-begun search, with a species of dull surprise. "I did love you."

"Did you, indeed?" said Dering, harshly. "It seems there are some things women can get over, after all. I suppose a man must die and haunt them to be remembered."

"But you do believe I loved you? You do believe that?"

"I did believe it," he said, with rough emphasis.

"But don't you believe it now?" she said, anxiously. "I don't feel anything now, but I know I loved you. Indeed, indeed, I'm not so bad as you think; and I must have loved you, to act as I did: it all proves that I did. I can't help not doing it now; I can't help not being sorry, or glad, or frightened, or anything, now. You know I wrote you once in a letter that I didn't feel anything. But I know I loved you."

"I believe you are crazy," said Dering, in a strangled voice.

"I wish I thought so," she said, plaintively; "but I know I'm not. I'm just stunned now, because I have been on such a terrible strain for so long, but my mind is as clear—as cool. I see everything; I see just how it would all have been; and I see how you are obliged to hate me at first. I would if I were you. You can't help it. I don't feel angry with you because you hate me: it would be unnatural if you did not; and then it will keep it from hurting you so. I would a great deal rather have you hate me than hurt you."

"Would you?" said Dering.

"Yes, I would,—I would. You don't believe it, but I would."

"It is hard to believe some things," was his reply. "I think, if you will be good enough to lend me a trap, that I will drive to Charlottesville."

"To-night?" she said, pausing again to look at him.

"Yes, to-night. Perhaps you can understand a feeling that I have against sleeping another night in this house."

"It's because I'm in it," she said, sadly. "I don't blame you. I don't blame you in the least."

"That is very good of you," he remarked, acridly. "Can I hope your generosity will extend to the loan I have just asked for?"

"You are really going to-night?"

"If you will kindly lend me a trap and horse, and some one to open gates."

"You can order what you wish," she said, slowly.

"Thanks," he replied. "I suppose I may shake your hand?"

She held it out to him silently.

"Good-by," he said; then, after a pause, "good-by, Barbara."

"Good-by," she answered, looking down at their clasped hands.

"Good-by," he said, once more; once more she answered him, still keeping her eyes on their hands, which now fell apart silently. He went to the door, and passed out, only to re-enter stumblingly, to catch her to him, to bruise her face and throat with short, hard kisses.

"I love you!" he said, in a voice of terrible anguish. "I am a coward: I love you in spite of everything! Oh, Barbara, Barbara, you will be so sorry for this to-morrow, when I am beyond your reach,—when you know that I have gone forever! For I won't come back after this: I will never come back. Barbara, think of it all!—think of our beautiful hours together,—of my kisses,—of the way you have clung to me,—of the way you have kissed my hair, my eyes, my throat,—as I kiss yours now!"

He almost hurt her in his desperate eagerness, but he might as well have tried to rouse response in a corpse. She lay in his arms panting,

but listless, and the eyes that she lifted to him were full of a certain timid pleading and dwelt upon him through great tears.

"I try to feel sorry, and I only feel sorry because I am not really sorry," she said, tiredly. "I know you are going, and that I loved you, and I try so hard to be sorry; but I can only think how nice it will be to go to bed and go to sleep. I am so tired! I don't think I will ever cry again, except because I can't cry. Oh, it all sounds so silly! but please try to understand."

"Good-by," he said, hoarsely, just touching her soft hair with strong but trembling fingers. "Give me your lips this once."

She lifted her mouth, but his passionate kiss left her parted lips as piteously expressionless as ever. "I can't do it! I can't feel anything! I try so hard!"

He knelt suddenly at her feet, and lifted her hands to his thick curls.

"Say, 'God be with you, Jock,'" he whispered, stammering.

She said it very sweetly, in a clear, earnest voice, as though anxious to please him: "God be with you, Jock."

"And with you," he said, giving one heavy sob.

He held her for a moment tightly about her knees, then went, closing the door after him with careful softness.

As he left the room, she fell once more to looking for the lost ring, found it at last underneath the fender, and, blowing the ashes from it, slipped it upon her finger as Dering drove from the door.

THE END.

WESTERN INVESTMENTS FOR EASTERN CAPITAL.

PUBLIC attention is at present directed to Western mortgages as a means of relief to Eastern people who have long suffered from the prevailing low rates of interest and the difficulty of obtaining investments at once safe and fairly remunerative. The cause of the awakened attention paid to this class of securities is found in the condition of the money-lending market East and West. A great disparity exists in the rate of interest which can be obtained in the two sections for money lent upon equally good mortgage security. In the large cities of the Atlantic seaboard persons living on incomes derived from fortunes invested with conservative prudence—prudence either voluntary or imposed by law, as in the case of trustees—have been suffering real hardship, both from the constant lowering of the rate of interest and from the fact of a portion of every estate lying idle, awaiting investment.

The principle which regulates this is a familiar one in business, supply and demand. Borrowers, desiring to obtain money upon first-class real estate, in any one of the large cities of the East, go to one after another of the trust companies, or other aggregations of capital. The eager demand for good mortgages enables better and better terms to be exacted from each successive plethoric lender. Down goes the rate of interest,—six per cent., five and a half, five, four and a half, and even four, if the security be especially desirable and the money-lenders overloaded with idle money. Finally, the impossibility of obtaining an adequate supply of safe mortgages, even at these low rates, compels financial institutions and trustees to put their funds to an excessive degree into Government, State, and City bonds. Hence the extraordinary demand for this class of securities has caused them to rise to such a premium that, while paying from three and a half to six per cent. on their par value, they in many instances net only from two and a half to three and a quarter per cent. on their cost. The Eastern investor thus finds it impossible to lend his funds for a fair return unless he venture into shady securities, where he can command a higher return,—not for the use of his money, but for the risk of its loss. Just how to pick one's way between the desert of low interest and the sea of bad investment is the problem daily confronting every prudent person with money to invest.

But, if he were to shut himself up for twenty-four hours in a luxurious drawing-room car and, travelling toward the setting sun, alight in a prosperous county town, an entirely different state of things would be observed. Instead of too much money and too few good mortgages, the exact contrary is the case. Mortgages upon the best real-estate security are offered to the local bank, but the bank has loaned its funds to the farmers to move their crops, to the tradesmen to lay in their season's stock, to the thousand-and-one temporary borrowers in a growing country requiring money for a short period and willing to pay liberally for it. The mortgage is hawked about from place to place; the

rate of interest rises as the difficulty of procuring money increases; six, six and a half, seven, seven and a half, eight, nine, and even ten per cent. is finally demanded. That a borrower can afford to pay such rates for money and yet thrive seems difficult to believe, unless one is informed as to the profits derived from the various Western industries. A recent careful authority has said that the profits of grain-, sheep-, and cattle-raising—the chief industries beyond the Missouri—are enormous. The average is not infrequently twenty-five per cent. on wheat, fifty per cent. on sheep, and on cattle a great return, varying with the circumstances. It is easy to see how high rates can be paid for money in order to procure and improve land which will yield such results.

It therefore appears that those having money to lend are enabled, by a few hours' railway-journey, to command perhaps twice as much for the loan of their capital, and upon security equally good,—provided they know in the West as well as in the East how to distinguish between good and bad. Many persons have made fortunes, and not a few corporations have grown rich and powerful, by this obvious course of lending where lenders are few and borrowers plenty.

But the number of persons who can afford the leisure and expense of making such trips—whose capital to be lent is large enough to warrant such expeditions, whose intelligence and energy are equal to the undertaking—must always be limited, and hence the disparity between the rates East and West continues. To bring the Eastern lender within reach of the Western borrower and to be compensated for the trouble out of the difference in the prevailing rates of interest the new investment companies have sprung up. Briefly stated, their function is to take the Eastern lender's money to the Western borrower, to obtain the local knowledge necessary for its safe investment, to manage the details, and to give the lender the advantages of the higher rates, after deducting a modest proportion thereof as compensation. To this has been added a system of guaranteeing, of which more hereafter.

The plan is but the application of an old idea to the requirements of a new country. Mortgages, themselves, are of great antiquity. The Roman pledge of land as security differed but little from our common mortgage, while the Grecian was chiefly different in the manner of perpetuating the evidence of existence of the mortgage: in lieu of a recorder's office a stone was set in a corner of the mortgaged field, with the amount loaned and the name of the lender graven upon it. The English common-law mortgage, brought by our own ancestors to this country and bearing a close resemblance to the antique model, has existed practically without change since the earliest beginning of common law. The writers upon finance uniformly dilate upon the stability of land as security, but point out the disadvantage which attends it in that it is not readily negotiable and in the formalities and expense of its transfer, both as security and, subsequently if necessary, as satisfaction for debt. To convert the unwieldy real estate into commercially negotiable security, like stock, without losing its stability as a security, is the problem to which land-mortgage companies devote their ingenuity. The idea appeared in a crude state in the fanciful schemes of John Law, whose proposition for a paper-money inflation by

the government, based upon the landed property of England, captivated the impecunious country squires of the then House of Commons. But to a Berlin merchant, Büding, belongs the credit, in 1770, of perfecting that brilliant financial system which, under the name of "Crédit Foncier," has spread over the whole of Europe during the past century, with some changes of detail in various centuries. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss these details: suffice it to say that in France, where it was introduced by M. Wolowsky about fifty years ago, the *crédit foncier* has attained its most gigantic proportions and its greatest success. In England the system has scarcely been introduced, and such companies as exist for bringing borrower and lender together have not yet arrived at the stage of development which is the unique feature of the true *crédit foncier*,—viz., the issuing of negotiable bonds based upon landed security. This well-tested financial system has been imported to America; and it is here, in a country where the money is more unevenly distributed and the population more widely separated geographically than in any country of Europe, that, modified and adapted to its particular work, it seems destined to accomplish its greatest results.

As hinted above, the recent investment companies have perfected a guaranteeing system partially modelled upon the European plan. Instead of transferring each Western mortgage to a particular Eastern investor, the mortgages are brought to the East and deposited, *en masse*, with another corporation,—a trust company,—to be held in trust for the Eastern investors, who are given bonds—called debenture bonds—secured upon the whole block of mortgages thus held by the trustee. The advantages of this arrangement are obvious. If interest upon a mortgage prove difficult to collect, and if foreclosure, delay without interest, and perhaps loss of capital, be the result, the whole of the inconvenience and loss falls not upon the unfortunate individual holder of that particular mortgage, but upon the combined capital of the investors. A small percentage of foreclosures involving losses, or, in some cases, gains, will always occur, but loss or gain will be a matter of small moment to the investors when combined.

The debentures are either five or six per cent. bonds. That represents the cost of money to the company. It is then lent in the West at an average of perhaps seven per cent., although this rate differs widely with comparatively trifling changes of locality and is dependent upon the facilities of access and the degree of notoriety the section enjoys in the East. It must be remembered that to advertise or "puff" a Western locality is a well-recognized field for public co-operation, and plans for doing so effectually are as carefully and frankly discussed as municipal improvements. But, aside from this local influence, it is observable that the rate has steadily declined of recent years, while the rate in the East will be stiffened by the Western drain. Thus the tendency of the new companies is to equalize the rates between East and West,—a great public benefit.

The method of transacting business varies with the company. The usual course is to take from the borrower a mortgage to secure the payment of two notes,—one note for the amount of the principal, with the

interest at the same percentage as that at which the company gets the money from the Eastern investors (say five per cent.), and the other note for the extra interest, computed for the entire term. This latter note represents the company's profit,—the difference between the rates of interest in the East and in the West.

It will readily be seen that to procure a million dollars at five per cent. in the East and to lend it in the West for seven per cent. for three years—a profit of six per cent. in three years, or sixty thousand dollars—is a very lucrative business. It is natural that such a business should attract capitalists, and that its apparent simplicity should be misleading to some. Nothing would seem to be required but to command sufficient confidence to obtain the money in the East and adequate agencies to distribute it in the West. No supposition, however, could be more erroneous. The most intimate knowledge of the locality, the most experienced and honest agents and lawyers, and the utmost conservatism even with these precautions, are necessary to lend money safely in the West. The values are more recently established than in the East. There is much discounting of the future,—a tendency to base calculations of present value upon hopeful anticipation of future increase. The next few years are looked to for as great a proportionate increase as the last, which marked the birth of a new place. A child upon seeing, for the first time, a mushroom grown to the height of several inches during its first night's existence, might be led to suppose that in a few days it would become a prominent feature in the landscape. Similarly, in a town which, springing into existence ten years ago, has doubled its population each five years and quadrupled the assessed valuations of its property in the same period, the people become infected with a propensity to exaggerate the probable future growth. Deceived by brief experience, biassed by local patriotism, and interested in enhancing the reputed value of their own belongings, the hopes of the future become the fictitious effigy of the present. It requires many years to convince the inhabitants that the town has its own rank, beyond which it will grow but slowly. The memory of the shock caused by the collapse of the city of Indianapolis after the insane era of inflation known as the "Indianapolis boom" even yet furnishes the text for conservative utterances in the West. If the company rely upon the opinion of resident appraisers, even when honest and faithful, these considerations should temper the confidence reposed in their judgment. And if the appraisers be not actuated by a strong sense of duty to their employer, the wish to favor a neighbor at the expense of a foreign corporation, or the desire to enhance the value of property owned by the appraisers themselves, will tend to lessen the accuracy of their estimates.

To insure the least possible bias, well-managed companies take great care in the selection of agents, both as to their honesty and also as to their freedom from local prejudice, and, in order to add the inducement of self-interest, treat them liberally and subject them to great responsibility. But beyond this some checks are necessary to guard against the weakness of human nature. One check consists of a careful scrutiny at intervals by officers from the East, if possible not by the mortgage company; but by the trust company with whom the mortgages are

deposited in trust. By far the most effective check, however, consists of an accumulation of data relating to the country in which the loans are to be made, which will enable principal officers to stop careless lending by sub-agents. These data, consisting of maps and notes made by agents travelling over the section in buggies, showing the water-courses, the character of the land,—whether low or high, wet or dry, stony or fertile,—the yield per acre of the neighboring cultivated land, and, to some extent, the nationality of the settlers (there being a great difference in the thriftiness of the nationalities), are indispensable to a sound management of the business. Their preparation involves no little outlay, but when once completed they constitute a “plant” which is as necessary as machinery to a manufacturer. By spreading this information on carefully-prepared maps, showing all these particulars, and indicating the value of the land per acre at each change of topography or physical conditions, the superior officers are enabled to exercise a most intelligent supervision of the work of subordinates. In the early attempts at transacting this business, a quarter of a century ago, there were several disastrous failures where bonds had been sold in the East which were supposed to be secured by carefully-selected mortgages in the West, but which were found to be of the wildest character, through lack of organization, and impositions and mistakes of agents. With the modern companies foreclosures are very infrequent, and, even where they occur, the result has usually been that the land brought more than the mortgage,—an actual profit. Well-managed concerns find foreclosure necessary only as to about one per cent. of the aggregate money invested in mortgages, and the net result even of this small number of foreclosures is not a loss.

But meagre published statistics are obtainable on the subject. In the report of a special committee of the Connecticut Legislature, made in 1878, upon the condition and management of life-insurance companies (which lend largely in the West on mortgages), the results of six companies are given, which commenced loaning in the West at various periods, the earliest being 1851. The total amount loaned by all was sixty-eight millions, of which forty-six millions were outstanding at the date of the report. The gains by foreclosure had been nine thousand dollars, while the losses had been but six thousand. It is obvious that to insure against such infrequent losses for a high premium is a paying business. And that is practically what the modern guaranteeing mortgage companies do,—insure against losses, in addition to managing the details of loaning the money.

These corporations are subjected to another danger besides that of reckless lending, and that is the peculiarity of the laws of certain Western States. It seems at first glance a little paradoxical that the sections of the country most in need of capital—the South and West—should, in a general course of legislation, discriminate against foreign and Eastern money. It might be expected that a growing country, needing capital, would do all in its power to render it secure, and thus invite that most timid and mercurial of economic forces. This would be the more broad-minded policy; but, perhaps from a tendency to cater to the majority (most of whom are already borrowers in fear of cred-

itors), laws have been passed in some States which, in restraining the influx of Eastern capital to be lent upon mortgage, have had as much effect as the similarly planned preferred-creditors laws have had in keeping out Eastern merchants. In the case of mortgages this tendency of the legislature is chiefly manifested in the equity of redemption,—a time given to a defaulting mortgagor, whose land has been sold, within which he may come forward and pay up principal and interest and get his land back,—during which period the title of the foreclosing mortgagee is incomplete and subject to be defeated by the redemption of the mortgagor. The effect of this is, of course, bad. The company loaning the money, in case of default, forecloses, but does not then become possessed of a clear title that can at once be sold if a buyer be found, but of an incomplete title, which may be divested by the former owner coming forward with the amount of the debt. It is curious to note how the folly of these laws increases as the States considered are farther from the centres of capital and therefore of sound financial theories. In most of the middle Western States the objectionable features are reduced to a minimum: the purchaser at the sale goes into immediate possession, and is only subject to be divested within twelve months, during which period the debt carries interest.

In the States lying somewhat farther West the status of the buyer is the same as in those last mentioned, but the time is extended to two years. In some of the far Western States, however, the height of the folly of these laws is reached, and results in virtual prohibition of money-lending by prudent companies. The extraordinary provision is inserted that, after default, the debtor instead of the creditor remains in possession of the land during the period of the equity of redemption, which is two years. And it has been decided in more than one of these States that no language can be employed in the instrument which shall constitute a waiver of this provision. The practical effect of such a law is that adventurers take up new land from the government, borrow on it, default upon the interest, remain in possession two years, deriving the benefits of the crops, and decamp with their movable effects to fresh fields in order to repeat the transaction. Competent local lawyers, selected and visited at intervals by home lawyers, are required to guard against these and other legal dangers.

The time has come to urge the legislatures to legalize the investment, under proper supervision of the courts, of trust funds in this class of securities. In many States the courts are already permitted to authorize trust companies (where there are such of undoubted responsibility and open to inspection by officers of the court) to act as trustees, executors, guardians, and in several fiduciary capacities. There can be no good reason why the legislatures, if the subject be carefully laid before them and explained to their committees, should not permit these investments and thus provide an outlet for idle trust funds. The objection to allowing trustees to invest in mortgages beyond the jurisdiction of the courts is, of course, a sound one, but in the case of debenture bonds which are guaranteed by a home company within the control of the court and additionally secured by Western mortgages, the objection that the investment is out of the jurisdiction of the court fails, while

the double security of the guarantee and the real estate furnishes the best practical argument in favor of such an innovation.

No one who has had any experience in managing Eastern investments in the West can fail to be struck by the richness of the field for lending,—the demand, safety, and high interest which capital enjoys,—nor by the apathy or ignorance which induces the mass of Eastern persons to content themselves with starvation rates in their immediate localities. Like all financial operations, the Western mortgage business requires care, experience, and discretion. When conducted with these safeguards, it affords the public a secure and remunerative means of making investment, and to the companies a profitable revenue.

Thomas Leaming.

VERZENAY.

O VERZENAY, pink Verzenay !
 At Brighton, friendless by the sea,
 Tell me true words that I shall say
 To passionate Venus, good for me.

Surely not yet dost thou forget
 The waving summer of thy prime,
 When those dark eyes thy clusters met,
 And long white feet on thee were set,
 Till delicate veins thy red life wet;
 Filling thee up with will to climb
 And fire us of a colder time !

O Verzenay, pink Verzenay,
 Thy life I think will live for aye !
 Some thought thou bringest me to-day
 Misty and glorious of old times :
 As in a dream my soul-feet stray
 On dew-damp ways in greener climes.

O Venus ! I behold an eye
 That once could glow as fierce as thine ;
 A bubbling pulse that beat as high
 As thine own veins made big with wine.

Ah, less and less—no sweet caress
 With thy lithe handmaids brightens them ;
 But still thy path my feet shall press,
 Thy head shall wed my anadem !

Of old I dreamed a horn should sound ;
 My pulse sustain a fairy child ;
 And I should find the fated ground
 And wake the princess in the wild.

Then I should meet the giant grim,
 And slay him winning mighty fame;
 The world should hear my victor hymn
 And marvel at my noble name!

My voice grows weak to wind the horn;
 The sleeping princess still doth sleep;
 And darkening o'er the glimmering morn
 The shadows of the night-tide creep!

Nathless, I met the giant grim—
 The cold earth. Chill my veins as lead;
 My hair is thin; mine eyes are dim;
 The fight is lost; the song is dead!

Yet, goddess, by the ceaseless sea
 At Brighton, still I worship thee,
 Lonely and old at twenty-three!
 The immortal marvel of thy lips,
 Thy fierce black eyes and awful hips,
 Shine seldom through my hope's eclipse!
 Make glad my bosom with thy smile,
 For long I seek thy vine-dark isle
 At Avalon, o'er many a mile!
 Yon crescent curves o'er western groves,
 But farther west the round sun roves
 To light the night of other loves:
 And I again have prayed in vain,
 Yet nevermore shall I complain!

O sparkling life! quick Verzenay!
 Thy soul-sparks on the wan lips play
 Of one whose spirit wanes to-day!
 At twenty-three I'm forty-six,
 At Brighton, by the moaning sea.
 What shall I be at thirty-three?
 No doubt I shall be sixty-six
 Nigh Hades on the gloomy Styx!

Well, hearken, sparkling Verzenay,
 And thank thee for the fire to-day!
 And shining Venus, flushed as wine,
 Albeit I know no love of thine,
 Even though thy proud eyes seek for me,
 Thou shalt not see a quailing knee,
 Though I shall sail Styx' sombre sea
 To-day, sad Heart, at twenty-three!

Daniel L. Dawson.

SOME DAYS WITH AMÉLIE RIVES.

EVERY one now knows the story of how "A Brother to Dragons" was offered to the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* by one somewhere designated "as a visiting friend," how he accepted it at once, with the enthusiastic remark, "The man who wrote this will never do anything stronger," how it was published anonymously and won instant appreciation, and how the public was soon after surprised to learn that a young girl living in a Virginia country house was the author of this vivid and picturesque and passionate tale. Perhaps the "visiting friend" whispered it to others, the name of Amélie Rives. At all events, it was very shortly signed to a free, strong, stirring sonnet in the *Century*. Several months later appeared in *Lippincott* "The Farrier Lass o' Piping Pebworth," which was perhaps more widely and more generously criticised than any short story of recent fiction. In quick succession followed "Nurse Crumpet's Story," a divinely passionate poem called "Grief and Faith," and the strongly imaginative "Story of Arnon."

Miss Amélie Rives is the grand-daughter of William Cabell Rives, the Congressman, Senator, and Minister-Plenipotentiary to France of the earlier half of the present century. It was during the reign of Louis Philippe that the birth of Mr. Rives's eldest daughter was the occasion of a graceful compliment from the French queen in the bestowal of her name upon the little lady. This Amélie, whose life opened in the romance of court life, and who bore always the prestige of a queen's name, proved a woman of decided character and talent, and her gifts—a faint shadowing of those to be possessed by a namesake yet unborn—were cruelly curtailed by her death in 1874, when she was drowned with her family on the ill-fated *Ville du Havre*.

Colonel Alfred Landon Rives, the father of Amélie Rives, was also born in Paris, and can boast of Lafayette as a godfather. He was educated chiefly in Paris, graduated at the *Ecole Polytechnique* with distinguished honor, and adopted civil engineering as his profession. In 1861 he was married to Miss Macmurdo, a grand-daughter of Bishop Moore, of Virginia, and a noted beauty. To them was born in 1863, in the town of Richmond, Virginia, the now famous Amélie Rives. Colonel Rives's profession entailed a somewhat wandering life, therefore the early years of the little Amélie were chiefly passed at the old home of her grandfather, Castle Hill, in Albemarle County, Virginia. She was a favorite companion of the grave statesman until his death, when the baby had grown to be a solemn-faced little creature of four. Colonel Rives continued to make Castle Hill his home for two years longer, and in that time the child contracted an almost passionate love for the beautiful old homestead, which did not until some years later become the property of its present owner. Her eyes seemed never rested unless they gazed out on the rolling meadows beyond the lawn gate or revelled in the sunset colors behind the crest of the charming

hills at the back of the house. It was a great wrench to leave ~~this~~ home for the new one in Mobile, Alabama; and, though she grew to be fondly attached to the quaint Southern town,—making of its tropical growth, the blue waters of its perfect bay, its Southern skies and winds and bird-notes, the Italy of her imagination,—yet the long visits to Virginia from early spring to the lingering days of autumn were the times of her greatest joy.

Like most imaginative children, Amélie was morbidly sensitive. Her fancies did not suit the children of every-day life; they misunderstood and somewhat dreaded her; while she, yearning with all the strength of childish passion (and in later life passion may be different, but not stronger) for love and appreciation, keenly felt its lack, and, thrown upon herself for her best pleasures, found the highest.

Before she could write a sentence she had begun to draw, feeling her way patiently through difficulty and ignorance, until it suddenly dawned upon her family that she possessed unusual talent. At an incredibly early age she became an omnivorous reader, going always instinctively to the highest. Shakespeare was soon her daily and intimate friend and companion. There is now, among the exquisite *éditions de luxe* that are constantly sent to the Shakespearian scholar, a battered, well-thumbed, clearly-printed volume of the Master's complete works. It has broad white margins pencilled over in a hand varying from the first childish scribblings to the formed, distinct, characteristic writing of the woman. These comments always show thought, and are often luminous. It is a short step from reading to writing, and this step Amélie quickly took.

It now became a serious matter to coax, borrow, or procure in any way paper to contain her imaginings. She dashed recklessly into story, drama, poem, always showing vivid imagination, and a sort of untrammelled strength, as one can readily believe after reading the sonnet in the *Century Magazine* already alluded to, which was written at the age of fifteen. Joined to this maturity was a fund of humor, superstition, and fancy, all of which made her a wonderful and enchanting child to older heads, though she was never comprehended or greatly loved by her child-friends. There is a pretty story told of her tying the legs of katydids to curling maple-leaves by means of her mother's embroidery-silk, throwing herself upon the grass, face downward, and, after sending the katydids scuttling off with their burden, praying that God would send them back with a real fairy in the leaf. This yearning to behold "a real fairy" seems at this period to have been the overweening desire of her soul. There is another picture of herself and her Fidus Achates sitting in the dim twilit woods at the back of the house. One can hear the future author of "Nurse Crumpet tells the Story," and the intense tragedy of "Herod and Mariamne," yet unpublished, ask, in wistful tones, "Do you think if I drank a whole cupful of warm *bubbly* blood, that I would see a real fairy?" can picture the horrified face of the little friend, and can catch her answer after a pause of terror, "No, but I am sure it will make you very *very* ill." We wonder if the yearning desire for the unattainable would have carried the dauntless little soul as far as this blood-thirsty experiment?

At one time she endured many pangs because of the eternal exclusion of the devil from Paradise, beseeching earnestly that he might be forgiven. And this strange child confessed herself afraid of nothing on earth so much as the bloody marks on the ceiling of her bedroom, made by a bird that had fluttered in, beating his head against the ceiling as he flew, and leaving its mark of death. The child imagined the blood to have been made by the finger of the apparition in Scott's "Betrothed."

She never went to school, but had governesses, who guided rather than taught. With a mind so eager for knowledge, there was little fear of idleness.

Some one, in writing of Miss Rives, says, "She has dipped her pen in herself;" and so she has, but always of herself in Virginia. An exquisite little essay appeared, and was lost, last summer, in the columns of *Harper's Bazar*. It was on "The Lack of Humor in Great Heroines," and opens with a sunny glimpse of lawn and trees and sky, with the writer lying along the "lush grass." One can often fancy her so in the long delicious idle days of summer. At another time she unconsciously depicts herself amid the fresh wet days of autumn, in a poem entitled "A Mood." No one knowing her could fail to recognize the "bright hair's flag," and the fresh drenched glow of the eager face.

Miss Rives's prowess in horsemanship has been much commented on. As a matter of fact, she is an excellent horsewoman, though not, as the papers would have us believe, in the habit of jumping five-barred gates as a frequent amusement. One can see her nearly every day in the autumn and early winter sending her large bay "Usurper" along the picturesque roads that surround Castle Hill.

She paints with the same instinctive power with which she writes, —struggling on with undaunted courage through the distracting mazes of color. As with her writing, she bides her time until fate carry her abroad, saying always, "It is genius to wait." By the way, "Fate" is a word never used by Miss Rives. She has been blessed from early childhood with the most unquestioning love and belief in the Maker of all things.

In the face of scurrilous paragraphs, which have hinted at every kind of belief, including disbelief, it is but just to say that Miss Rives acknowledges and reverences to the utmost the God who has so lavishly endowed her with great gifts.

Perhaps it is trite to say that every home is stamped by the individualities of its occupants, but surely it is unusual to see an old homestead with its associations, legends, and architecture restamped by the personality of a young girl.

Now the room formerly known as the "west wing" is shown as "Roden's, the one that Virginia died in." What has been called the "south chamber" for over a hundred years is now boasted of as the room where Virginia spun in the company of her unique pets. So with the "drawing-room," its pictures with their jewel-like effect, the old piano where Roden found the country-girl striking chords to see where the keys stuck, the dining-room where the heart-sick girl

served that dainty meal to Roden and his sweetheart, when, overcome by love and passion, she burst out into, "I won't wait on her!" On my first introduction to this temple of hospitality and plenty, as I entered, and my host following shut the door, I was haunted by the thought of Virginia's love-wounded eyes, and fancied I heard in the drawing of the *portière* the swish of the girl's short skirts as Roden, amazed but cool, calmly closed the door.

There is another room, still more interesting, filled with the personality of an imaginative mind. It is, as Hawthorne writes of his own, a haunted chamber. Let us turn to his words. "Here," he says, "I have written many tales, many that have been burned to ashes, many that doubtless deserved the same fate. This claims to be called a haunted chamber, for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it. If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed." It is meet, therefore, that those interested in Miss Rives, who believe in her future greatness, should have a glimpse of the home where her wonderful stories were born, where the vague, beautiful dreams of childhood and girlhood, conceived in the hot-house of solitude, have blossomed out so generously into leaf and flower.

The white walls of this girlish, bower-like study are scattered over with delicate blue flowers, unobtrusively assisting the effect of many bold sketches in oil and charcoal, as well as two magnificent sea-views by Alexander Harrison. Amélie Rives's strong love of the sea is one of her most pronounced characteristics. One, a long narrow strip of sky and sea, where the waves break and curl in cringing eddies upon the beach, is full of luminous violet light, and through wave and foam and cloud flushes the after-glow of the sun. In full serene and golden beauty, poised half-way in the sky, the moon pours forth her beams clear to the foreground, apparently to one's feet. It fills one in studying it with the grand and assured conviction that in nature there can be no conflict, that there is "one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon," and that each augments the other. The second painting, perhaps more powerful in its simplicity of color and swinging action, is a glimpse of the ocean by night,—as though, looking from a port-hole far out on the deep, one should gaze forth and feel the depth and color and mystery of the sea, covered with its pall of night. Another glance, and you catch the swell of the water, its silver light and upward-heaving wave, and even the angelic light far off where meet sea and sky cannot stay you from your berth and a horizontal posture.

The tall, slenderly-panelled mantel is crowded with rare bric-à-brac. Over this is draped a richly-wrought blue silk and cloth-of-gold "Abba," sent to Miss Rives direct from Persia. Next, in charming contrast, hangs a mass of white satin and tattered silver tissue like clustered cobwebs, through which is thrust and crossed a pair of tarnished swords drawn from their scabbards. This is a little touch of womanly sentiment, and, unlike the cobwebs which the tissue resembles, is a pleasant reminder of a foreign country and splendid scenes. The crumpled, shining masses are the remains of the first court dress worn by Mrs.

William Cabell Rives, and the swords once clanked at the side of our former minister at the gay court of France.

The windows, draped in lightly-embroidered muslin and India silk of an indescribable sea-blue tone, brightened with bands of silver open-work, look out upon the lawn described in "Virginia" as having been possibly fashioned by the "careless step of a mighty Titaness among the flowers and shrubbery." The charming brass bed, with its quaint canopy, is hung in silk and muslin to match the windows, and some beautiful pieces of enamelled white and brass furniture, designed by Miss Rives, give an air of bright cheerfulness which is accentuated by the soft white fur rugs which lie about the gray-blue of the carpet.

One cannot be literary and orderly, and it follows that the large table of carved oak, supported on the wings of four sphinxes couchant, is quite covered with books, papers, proofs, pens,—ornamental and useful,—in fact, all the paraphernalia that bespeak eager and constant work. In unique contrast to this is the dainty toilet-table, with linen cover sprinkled with blue forget-me-nots, its large mirror framed in carved white holly and china painted with peach-blossoms, its ivory-backed brushes, etc., etc.

One would think that many tables and a private secretary were needed to keep pace with the correspondence which is growing to be a distinct burden to the young author. One wonders, for the hundredth time, why people who apparently lose their minds when they take up a pen should persist in needlessly wielding it. Every author is gratified by words of appreciation, even helpful suggestion, be the source ever so unknown. But why, we ask, because she writes for the public, should an inoffensive creature be compelled to tolerate such communications as the following?—

"MISS RIVES,—I do not like 'Virginia of Virginia' at all. If you were writing for money I could understand its publication, but, as you are not, I consider it an unworthy descent from your former publications. I send you my good wishes for the New Year, in spite of the fact that you have not answered my last letter of several months ago.

"Yours, very truly,
"_____."

There are many anxious inquirers, one lady wishing to know what foundation Miss Rives had for the assertion that Queen Victoria absolved the Albemarle pippin from duty. She was roused to this keen anxiety by an English gentleman who argued that it was "nonsense." Miss Rives sent a polite rejoinder to the effect that she regretted she had only the word of another "English gentleman" for the statement, and that she could see no greater nonsense in so gracious an act of England's present queen than in that of a past one who tyrannically dictated the height of the ruffs of her subjects.

The very brief period of my stay at "Castle Hill" was happily rounded off the evening before my leaving by a memorable walk with Miss Rives and her father. It was cold, still weather, and we started off in the last-falling flakes of a snow-sprinkle in company with two

fine dogs, a most *human* collie and a Bordelais dog,—a cross between blood-hound and bull-dog,—a faithful, rather heavy animal, savage enough for his mistress to carry with her a stout dog-whip. Our destination was the ice-house, where ice was being hauled; and very pleasant it was to watch two negroes in the great blue wagon shovelling in smooth flat cakes of ice,—delicious to city ears the crunching of ice on ice as it fell in its bed of sawdust and was broken and firmly packed by other negroes in the ice-house with heavy iron sledges. Here a brace of greyhounds joined us, by name Tweedledum and Tweedledee,—diminished, of course, into “Dum” and “Dec.” These pretty creatures bounded about, laying their muddy paws recklessly over their mistress, and enlivened by their pranks the walk to the pond. Here we left Colonel Rives discoursing with the overseer on the ice question, and walked briskly over the gray, wire-grass-grown fields through tall bunches of broom. My eyes were on the soft misty down of the mountain before us, my mind deep in absorbing conversation, when we suddenly missed the dogs, to find them flying after the sheep in the meadow down by the pond. Miss Rives whistled and called back the collie and Turc, but Dum and Dee, being unbroken pups, were worming in and out of the huddled sheep, darting off after frightened run-aways. Miss Rives took an abrupt leave of me, and dashed over the fields in her mud-stained corduroy skirt, tan gaiters, and sturdy porpoise-hide boots, hallooing for the greyhounds and keeping the other dogs to heel. She caught Dum, after he had killed a sheep, and, holding him to the ground, lashed him until her arm dropped. What a picture she made, with the crouching, yelping hound, her face swept with color from brow to chin, the dark blue of her Tam o’ Shanter crushing the short brown-gold curls against her forehead! I stood in idle admiration, mournfully regretting my ability to secure the picture, with its setting of a gray winter day, for the benefit of all lovers of the beautiful.

Meanwhile, Colonel Rives tore about the fields, waving his hat frantically before him, shouting at the recreant Dee and ineffectually endeavoring to corner her. Dee loped off cheerfully with a lamb in her mouth, followed full chase by the top-booted, weather-stained, burly overseer, who finally frightened the dog into dropping her half-dead prey, and brought her in triumph to her mistress for castigation.

It was all very picturesque, but returning homeward after the excitement Colonel Rives remarked, with prosaic soberness, that the walk had cost him just fifteen dollars. For him the adventure was dearly bought. For me it remains a delightful picture,—a finishing touch to the charming impressions I gathered of this Southern girl, so ambitious that no height seems too great for her climbing, so careless of what the world of society holds dear, that she is happier in the open meadows with her dogs, in her room alone with her imaginings, in the society of those dearest to her, than in any brilliant gathering which she might adorn.

J. D. Hurrell.

WITH GAUGE & SWALLOW.*

NO. IV.—THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

"BURRILL," said Mr. Gauge, coming into the office one day at lunch-time when we three, Minton, Burrill, and myself, were sitting round the little enclosure in which stood the old man's desk, "can you lay your hands on the papers in Ainsworth *vs.* Ainsworth?"

Mr. Gauge's voice always had a touch of tenderness in it when he spoke to the old clerk.

"Ainsworth again? Ainsworth? Of course I can. The first word I ever wrote in this office—it was at this very desk, too—was the caption of that case. And, begging your pardon, sir, for saying it, though it has paid well enough, first and last, I wish it had never come into the office at all. Is there any particular paper you want, sir?"

"Bring them all, Burrill," answered the Senior, with a smile. "Perhaps I shall be able to get rid of the whole lot at once."

"I hope you will, sir; I hope you will," muttered the old man, as he took his cane and stumped across the office to the cases where the files are kept.

"Failing, isn't he?" said the lawyer, as he watched the old man's unsteady movements. "He always did have a spite against the case, however."

He seated himself and talked to Mr. Minton while waiting for Burrill's return.

"Here they are," said that worthy, producing a great file of papers, placing them on edge and carefully dusting them before untying the package. "What will you have, sir? I hope there is nothing more to be done in the matter?"

"Well, yes, there is; and, as I've got to run over the papers, I may as well tell the whole story to Minton as I go along. We've had a hard morning, and can afford a little longer 'nooning' than usual. I'll have my luncheon brought here, and we will look over the papers as we eat."

"I'd a deal rather pitch them into the fire, sir," said Burrill, doggedly. "It's the only thing in the office that never seemed exactly square."

"Pshaw, Burrill!" said Mr. Gauge; "it's not often I tell a story so let me have those two first letters and start at the beginning, like a bill in Equity. These are the ones," he added, as Burrill laid before him two old and yellow papers carefully folded and endorsed. The one, I could see, was in a lady's fine Italian hand; the other in the clear, firm writing of one whom I judged to be a lawyer, despite its legibility.

"Just read them, won't you, Mr. Fountain? you seem to be the only one who has his mouth at liberty. The lady's first, please."

I had finished my lunch sooner than the others, and his had just been brought in.

So I read :

"MR. THEOPHILUS GAUGE :

"DEAR SIR,—A daughter of John Codman desires your assistance.

"Respectfully,

"LUELLA AINSWORTH."

The other, to the same address, read as follows :

"DEAR SIR,—Enclosed you will find a line from a client who is desirous that you should appear with me in a matter in which she is concerned. She is well able to pay a reasonable honorarium, and I am instructed, should you be willing to accept a retainer, to request you to draw on me at sight through Libbey & Co., of Richmond, who will take pleasure in honoring your order. I would advise that you leave the further consideration of the amount you will charge for your services until we have had opportunity to consult. Allow me to say that I most heartily second my client's importunity, and hope to have the honor of appearing in a case of some interest with one so well and favorably known to our bar.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"EDWIN R. BUFORD.

"P.S.—I ought perhaps to have informed you as to the character of the litigation in which your assistance is desired. The case is an issue of *devisavit vel non*, involving the title to a considerable estate. The question turns on the validity of a holograph will discovered nearly a year after the alleged testator's death, in a desk which had been in possession of his wife, in whose favor it is drawn, since his disappearance,—for the fact of death, though not contested, is not susceptible of explicit proof. The case, under our statute, is not without difficulty, though I by no means share the anxiety felt by the proponent. As she has a considerable estate in her own right, there is no reason why she should not enjoy that security which she has scriptural authority for expecting from 'a multitude of counsellors.'

"The issue will come on for trial during the Fall Term of our Superior Court, which sits on the sixth Monday after the first Monday in September. Should it suit your pleasure to accept, I should advise that you reach here not later than the second day of the term, and earlier if consistent with other engagements.

"E. R. B."

"These letters," said Mr. Gauge, reflectively, "which came in one envelope, constituted my entire mail one day in July, 1854. I was a young attorney then, with a comfortable den in 'The Swamp,' and a

fair enough outlook for the future, but I still got my mail at the 'General Delivery' and went for it myself. I had a snug little list of clients who paid me a moderate sum each year to advise them about their business and appear for them whenever they had need of an attorney in court. I had held a brief in several important cases, and had led in one notable trial with a famous name associated with me. Yet I did not get as many letters then as my youngest daughter does now. So I had plenty of time to read these, and I read them over a good many times that day, though I started home fully an hour earlier than usual on account of them.

"To be employed in a case standing for trial in another State, and especially in a Southern State, was a very gratifying event. I had never been out of the State on professional business, and I regarded it as a great honor to hold such a retainer. Even hundred-dollar fees had not been abundant in my practice. I had received one of a thousand, but its fellow had not yet made its appearance. But this retainer meant more than money to me then. I should have signified my acceptance by return mail but for two reasons: I thought it would not be prudent to appear too eager, and I wanted also to take advice on the matter.

"I used to talk all important cases over with Emily—that is my wife's name—in those days. She was the only partner I had, you see, and I must admit that I made very few mistakes in following her advice. I carried the letters home and read them to her that night. There were tears of pleasure in the good woman's eyes when she fully realized their import. You will understand this better when I tell you the reason a young lawyer hardly able to earn a living was spoken of in such complimentary terms by a practitioner who, for aught I knew, might be double my age, in another and remote State.

"Three years before, John Codman had come to my office one morning, placed a fifty-dollar bill on my table, and asked me to take steps to sue out a writ of *habeas corpus* for a negro—a fugitive from slavery—who was confined in the Tombs to await the conclusion of formalities for his return to the possession of his master. The vessel on which he was to be shipped would sail in a few hours, and no time could be lost. I knew John Codman to be an active and leading spirit among the Abolitionists. My father had kept a station on the Underground Railroad, and in my youth I had more than once been employed as a medium of communication between Codman in New York and the country parsonage to which the human wares that came to his hands were consigned. To this fact, I doubt not, I owed my selection for this important task. In those days it was no easy matter to get lawyers of established repute to take up the case of a fugitive slave. Of course the one most nearly concerned was never able to pay a reasonable fee for such services, and the attorney undertaking it was very likely to be boycotted by his other clients. At that time, and, indeed, up to the very outbreak of the civil war, the business-men of New York were by a large majority pro-slavery in their sentiments. A great portion of our trade was with the South, and to be an Abolitionist was to be looked upon as the enemy of the city's prosperity. But all this time, however, the sentiment of hostility to slavery was crystallizing in the popular mind, and

the Abolitionists were growing bolder in the assertion of their peculiar views.

"I did not dream of hesitating, though I thought it probable I might lose some of my best clients. Hardly stopping to pocket the fee, I began the preparation of the papers from memoranda furnished by Mr. Codman, and before the slave could be smuggled on board the steamer the writ of *habeas corpus* was served on those having him in custody, in spite of the efforts of the police to prevent it. In fact, I not only procured the writ, but served it myself, and when night came had some visible bruises to show for my temerity. The hearing was set for the next morning. The attempt at reclamation had become known throughout the city, and a mob gathered about the City Hall, threatening all manner of evil against the instigators of the movement to deprive the master of his property, which was then considered just about as disreputable as horse-stealing is now held to be in Montana. Fortunately, the Abolitionists of that day, if not lavish of funds, were of indomitable spirit, and did not hesitate to expose themselves to violence in the cause of personal liberty.

"I have seldom been in such a notable company as marched with me through the howling mob that morning. I had a black eye, it is true, but among my body-guard were many whose names are now written among the stars,—ministers, merchants, the most renowned of journalists, and, best of all, one of the most notable of my own profession, who said, as he linked his arm with mine,—

"‘I have entered an appearance with you in this matter, and have come to sit beside you, not to take any of the credit of the case, but to help you if you need it, and to see that you are not overmatched by numbers.’

"He was as good as his word, too.

"As we went up the steps we met the man whom I regarded as my best client. He had not only given me his own business, but had induced others to give me theirs. He was in a terrible passion. Shaking his fist in my face, he exclaimed,—

"‘If you go on with this business, sir, you must give up mine.’

"It is a bad time to attempt to coerce a lawyer when he is sore from being hauled over the cobble-stones in serving a writ and the case is about to be called which he believes will give him some revenge for what he has suffered. There is as much human nature ‘to the acre’ in the profession as I have ever seen anywhere; and a man is like a bull in that he doesn’t scare worth a cent when his blood is up.

"I was never much of a bully, and not accustomed to lose my temper, at least away from home. I was able-bodied, however, and the day before had shown that I could use the arm of flesh in an emergency. My client’s tones and fists were too much for my equanimity.

"‘Go to — with your business,’ I cried, ‘but get out of my way, or I will knock you down!’

"I should have done it, too. It was a foolish speech, but, despite its profanity, the distinguished company with me endorsed it heartily. It was only another instance of substance being more important than form. The matter got wind through their approval, especially that

of the journalist, who gave it a prominent place in his account of the proceedings.

"As you are aware, the application was successful, the court holding that the master had forfeited his right to compel the slave's return to service by having voluntarily brought him into a free State. I received a great deal more credit than I deserved for the part I had taken, and when I had reached my office that night I found a check for a thousand dollars awaiting my arrival as a general retainer from the heaviest house in the country in the particular line of my irate client. I lost some business, but gained more, and I have always looked upon this case as the real foundation of my success.

"I naturally looked for wholesale abuse on the part of Southern journals for the course I had taken, and in this I was not disappointed. Very much to my surprise, however, I received numerous letters from members of the Southern bar, commending my fidelity to my client's interest, and promising to remember it whenever they had business requiring attention in the city. Among these was one from Mr. Buford, who was a practitioner of some eminence in his State. Though he was a slave-holder himself, he said, he recognized the fact that the law was the measure of all right, and if a man chose to take his negro to a State where slavery was forbidden, he ought not to complain if he suffered loss. As to my course, he said, it was an attorney's business to see that his client had the benefit of the law, whether he was a white man or a 'nigger,' and if any one obstructed him in that duty he ought to fight. I need not say that this letter gave me great pleasure; and now my generous correspondent and the daughter of my old friend united in inviting me to appear in a case in which the one was engaged as counsel and the other concerned as client.

"This was the first time I had been called to go outside the State on professional business, and I was very nervous about appearing before a strange court. During the three months that intervened I made a most exhaustive study of every question that can arise on the issue of *devisavit vel non*, but more especially of the more limited field of holograph and other exceptional testamentary forms. It is not too much to say that when I finally started for the county of North Carolina in which the issue was to be tried, I knew all there was to be learned from books on the subject of nuncupative wills.

"I arrived a few days before the opening of the term, and found my associate to be a man at least a dozen years older than myself, of slender form, with a calm blue eye, quiet almost reserved manner, and with nothing about him to indicate the heartiness which he had displayed in his letters to me. There was no lack of cordiality in his welcome, but I felt at once that his appreciation had been won by the faithfulness with which I had served my client, rather than from any sympathy with the results of my action. This discovery was something of a shock, since I was at that time one of those absurd sentimentalists who expect men reared under the most divergent influences to show the same moral inclinations. He was a brave man, and a lawyer who had more than once risked his life for a client, and had a natural admiration for one who did likewise. As for the negro, he had no sym-

pathy with the opinions or prejudices of Northern sentimentalists in regard to his rights or his wrongs. Such rights as the law gave, whether to slave or freeman, he would willingly aid to enforce; but beyond that he did not go.

"This is the account he gave me, in clear cool tones and in the most lucid and succinct manner, of the case we had to try. I knew very little of his standing at the bar, but he had not uttered a dozen sentences before I was fully satisfied of three things: first, that he could not be for any considerable period a member of any bar without being one of the leaders of it; second, that he was profoundly interested in this case, and especially in our client; and, third, that he regarded with a feeling very close to resentment her persistent demand that I should hold a retainer in the case. I knew also that I should have great difficulty in overcoming this feeling. He was not a man accessible to flattery, nor one who would in any manner aid me in securing his good will. He would be polite, gracious, and communicative as to the facts; he would inform me fully of what had been done, and of the line of action proposed by our opponents; but of his own views and speculations he would say nothing. The way to his esteem lay wholly through his head.

"Luella Codman eight years before had made her appearance in Earlshire County as the wife of Major Matthew Ainsworth, a gentleman of liberal education, of fair estate, and of a numerous and somewhat aristocratic family. Whence she came, what were her antecedents, or who were her relatives, no one knew. Mr. Ainsworth had met her in a South Carolina family where she was employed as governess. Fascinated by her beauty and attainments, he asked no questions, but was told that she was an orphan without living relatives and had no friends she cared to remember. She was known at that time as Miss Luella Robards.

"The major's family were not long in seeking to penetrate the mystery of her past; but if there was any she guarded it well. Mr. Buford was not even aware of the contents of the note he had forwarded to me, and I did not feel called upon to enlighten him as to her relation to Codman, who, by the way, had died soon after bringing me the case on which my notoriety if not my reputation as a lawyer was based. My associate evidently expected me to shed some light upon the early life of our client; but I contented myself with remarking that I did not remember to have ever met her.

"Major Ainsworth would have been entirely happy in his domestic relations but for the stubborn refusal of his wife to accompany him to any place of public resort. In the county she was a belle of acknowledged pre-eminence, but out of it she never stirred. She did not claim any fondness for domestic vocations, but very soon assumed with her husband's full assent the management of his estate, very greatly to the advantage of his exchequer. The acreage in cultivation more rapidly extended, improved methods were adopted, and new economies inaugurated. Year by year more land was purchased and title taken in her name, the major boastfully asserting that it represented her earnings. One thing was noticeable: no slave was permitted to till

the lands thus acquired, which were cultivated under her supervision either by 'croppers' or 'hirelings,'—white people who worked on shares or for wages. Yet all prospered, so that after six years the major came to be looked upon as one of the wealthiest men in the region. Withal, his wife was a woman of spirit, of varied acquirements, a dashing horsewoman, and a practised shot. Her devotion to her husband was notable and unwavering. To say that she was blind to his faults—or fault, rather, since he had but one—would not express the half of it. She demanded that every one else should 'be blind too. A man who happened to make an allusion to his inebriety in her presence was compelled to apologize at the muzzle of her pistol. The result was the entire reformation of her husband, whose infatuation for her was redoubled by this fact. There was but one fly in the precious ointment of his domestic life: he was convinced that his wife had a secret which gave her great unhappiness, and he determined to discover its nature and remove her sorrow. Unfortunately, he kept this purpose from her. He thought her sorrow was in some manner connected with her past life, but had not the least suspicion that it could be anything discreditable to her.

"He communicated his purpose to Mr. Buford, who tried to dissuade him from it, but in vain. He had somehow gotten a clue to her past, which he determined to follow, and, having made a will devising everything to his wife, he went North and after a few months wholly disappeared. He was supposed to have been on a steamer that was lost on Lake Michigan about that time, but of this there was no positive proof. He was known to have been in Chicago the week before, and had an engagement in New York the week after, which was never filled. More than three years had elapsed since his disappearance. His wife had remained in possession of his estate, because it was generally understood that a will had been made in her favor. After a while it was noised about that there was no will; and it was only when steps were taken by the heirs to have an administrator appointed that the will then in controversy was offered for probate.

"The rumor that she intended to remove the slaves to a free State and give them their liberty no doubt hastened the action of the heirs,—such a rumor being, as Mr. Buford remarked, regarded as little less than a declaration of war itself. How the rumor arose he was unable to conceive. That she had such a purpose he did not doubt. A peculiarity of her nature seemed to be an instinctive and ineradicable aversion to this institution, which was manifested more by what she did *not* say than by any words she was ever known to utter. While she no doubt entertained this feeling, he thought her the last person in the world to have given any hint of her design. But for some investments she had made, he would never have suspected it himself. In short, I gathered from him that our client was not one who asked advice as to what she should do, but simply required a lawyer's aid to carry her designs into effect or protect her against encroachments from others.

"I was quite prepared, therefore, as our conversation progressed, to learn that the story of the will was a curious one.

"As I have told you," said Mr. Buford, 'I had drawn Major

Ainsworth's will, according to his instructions, some little time before his departure, and it was witnessed by two of my neighbors. When it came to be generally believed that he was dead, his wife sent for me to come to her house and requested me to act as her legal adviser. She did not share the general belief in her husband's death, but gave no reason for disbelieving, and remarked that she had thought it best not to say so to any one else, and had only manifested her incredulity by declining to wear mourning or join in the request for funeral services in his memory.

" 'These facts would probably have attracted little attention in a Northern community,' continued Mr. Buford, with just the hint of a sneer in his calm even tones and clear blue eyes, 'but with our country people a funeral is the most important event of life, and mourning a formality the omission of which is an evidence of immeasurable depravity.

" 'I found the premises in the most perfect order. The master's absence had made no difference with its condition, as indeed there was no reason why it should. Within the house everything showed the most scrupulous regard for his memory. His saddles, spurs, whips, and guns were scattered about the room adjoining her bedchamber, which had been the one he occupied, just as he had left them. This room she permitted no one else to enter, dusting and arranging it with her own hands. The only alteration she had made was to hang her husband's portrait above his desk. This latter she informed me that she had opened but once or twice since his departure, when it became necessary to procure some papers from it. The key had always been kept in her room, hanging at the side of her own little desk, of which she had always exclusive control. The door from the major's room into the "living-" or sitting-room had been closed ever since his departure, so that the only means of access to it lay through the wife's room. This had always been customary during his absence. In a double drawer of this desk I found the will. It was the one I had drawn and witnessed by my neighbors. I glanced it over, noting these facts, but did not read it carefully. The other compartment of the drawer was filled, as a cursory examination revealed, with bundles of receipts, bills of lading, returns from his factors, and other matters of like character.

" 'I advised an immediate probate of the will, but she seemed disinclined to accept the suggestion. From that time her business has passed through my hands and I have been her constant adviser. I must admit that she has been a model client, listening patiently to my suggestions, but always deciding for herself.

" 'When the heirs began to move for the appointment of an administrator, I wrote to her that it was time the will was offered for probate. In response she came and informed me that on going to get the will it was nowhere to be found. She declared that she had not seen it nor indeed opened the desk at all since we had seen it together. She averred also, much to my surprise, that she had never read the will, and knew nothing of its provisions beyond the fact that her husband had informed her that he had made a will in her favor. I had no copy

of it, and so could not set it up as a lost testament. Though I vaguely remembered its provisions, I could not reproduce its language, which was peculiar, and to me in some respects obscure, in the parts dictated by the husband. There was nothing to be done, except to set forth these facts in an affidavit and ask a continuance of the petition for an administrator until further search should be made for the lost instrument. This was the more readily granted as it was universally conceded that the estate was in good hands, the court only enjoining her from removing any of the slaves from its jurisdiction and requiring her to make report of the personalty.

“Some weeks afterwards Mrs. Ainsworth came to my office, and, after making some inquiries as to what was necessary to constitute a will, produced several sheets of paper fastened together in a manner somewhat peculiar to her husband, by turning down the upper left-hand corner and sticking a pin through the folded part. These sheets were numbered at the top, each page signed at the bottom, dated a few days after the will I had drawn, and were all in the unmistakable handwriting of the testator. This handwriting, it may be remarked, was the most striking I remember ever to have seen,—the contracted letters almost as long as the extended ones, and the whole utterly without shade. He usually wrote on unruled paper, yet the lines were as straight as if laid off with a rule. Where Matt Ainsworth acquired this most difficult and almost illegible hand nobody knew; that he was very proud of it every one in this region was well aware.

“The provisions of this remarkable testament were identical, so far as I could recall them, with the one I had drawn. Mrs. Ainsworth’s story of its discovery was that her husband appeared to her in a dream and directed her to search in the left-hand portion of the drawer in which the other will had been deposited. There, under the bundles of receipts and other memoranda of the business of passing previous years, she had found the sheets she had brought to me.

“This is the will we have to defend. There is no doubt about its being of later date than the one which was abstracted from the desk, of which no trace has been found. How and by whom it was taken is a mystery. I was inclined to suspect our client, but am at a loss for a motive—at least a probable motive—for such an act. On the other hand, it will be difficult to supply a motive for this will. It is all right in form. Ainsworth could have taken no better way to make it incontestable. There has been talk about its being a forgery, and they may attempt some such tactics on the trial. This will not be dangerous. The chief difficulty will be to account for its existence at all, and to show that it was found with the decedent’s valuable papers as the statute requires. For this Mrs. Ainsworth is our only witness; and I confess I am afraid of the result.’

“May not Mr. Ainsworth have feared the loss of the attested will and provided this as a safeguard?” I asked.

“That, of course, is the hypothesis we must adopt,” he answered, quietly. “Does it not seem to you rather strained?”

“Perhaps; but what other reason could there have been? I understand you to say the provisions of the two were the same?”

“‘So far as I can remember, they contained identically the same bequests. Yet I am positive there is a difference in the phraseology which would prevent me from testifying that they were identical. You understand?’

“‘You will not be a witness, then?’

“‘Not unless “our friends the enemy” put me on the stand.’

“There was a flash in his steel-blue eyes that augured ill for them if they did.

“‘What was the difference you refer to?’

“‘The will I drew described the principal devisee simply as his wife, Luella Robards Ainsworth. In the holograph she is described as “Luella Ainsworth, once known as Luella Robards, esteemed and loved as my faithful wife.”’

“My associate eyed me keenly as he repeated these words. He evidently expected me to make some deduction which he hesitated to put into words.

“‘It seems to be a somewhat fuller description,’ I said, after a moment’s thought.

“‘Fuller!’ he repeated, with an added suaveness in his silvery tones, which I learned afterwards always marked a peculiarly annihilating thrust at the man who happened to be at his mercy. ‘Does it not occur to you that it is a totally different description?’

“‘How so?’ I asked.

“‘“My dear wife Luella,” etc., and “Luella,” etc., “esteemed *as a wife*.”’

“His eyes were half closed, and the words fell from his lips in soft musical accents, with an indescribable emphasis on the contrasted terms. I started in surprise as I grasped his meaning. This smooth-mannered man was one whose steel-blue eye caught everything and whose subtle brain permitted not even the slightest change of phraseology to pass unnoticed.

“‘And you think——?’ I asked.

“‘I think,’ he interrupted, with a peculiar meaning in his tone, ‘that under the holograph our client Luella would take whatever cognomen she is legally entitled to wear. Is not that your opinion?’

“There was a grave irony in his tone that was indescribably amusing, and I answered with a hearty laugh, but said nothing. He smiled pleasantly, and I could see by the look in his eyes that both my laugh and my silence had been well-timed. He evidently thought I knew more than I chose to tell and was not likely to be betrayed into indiscreet speculation.

“On Monday the court sat. It was an old-time court-house, dating back almost to the Revolution. The judge’s bench ran across the gable well up towards the ceiling, and was approached by a winding stairway at each end. The bar sat within a semicircular railing in front, flanked on one side by the clerk’s desk, on the other by the jury-box. Every lawyer as he entered made a profound obeisance to the judge, which was gravely acknowledged by that dignitary. Mr. Buford introduced me first to the court and then to each member of the bar. The latter were a splendid company of gentlemen, courteous, unaffected, and of

marked individuality of character. I soon found myself at home among them, despite the strange surroundings. The carved wooden seats that ran around the enclosure in which the bar sat, the floor covered with saw-dust, boxes half a yard square filled with the same and used as spittoons, the bucket of water standing upon the stove with a gourd floating on its surface, the people crowding behind the bar, unseated except a few on the wooden bench that ran around the side, the judge peering down from his perch just below the ceiling, the curious juxtaposition of order and disorder, courtesy and grime, seemed very odd to me, but I soon found myself at home with the bright keen intellects of the bar. I knew Mr. Buford was watching me, and was conscious that he was gratified at the impression I made upon his brethren. He was no doubt afraid that I might 'put on airs,' which is so frequent a fault with the city lawyer of the North when he condescends to enlighten the purlieus of the country court-house. To such assumption the Southern bar are especially sensitive, as well they may be, since it is doubtful if the bar of any Northern city can compare in thoroughness of preparation, or depth and variety of attainment, with the average Southern practitioners. I was spared from giving offence by a sincere admiration for the skill and learning displayed in the conduct of the business of the court. I can honestly say I never saw as many cases disposed of with so little fuss in any other court I ever attended.

"During that day I examined the will on file in the clerk's office, and took a copy. The issue had been transferred to the Superior Court for trial by the judge and a jury. I met our client, too, and was certainly much impressed by her appearance. She was a slight woman, somewhere about thirty, or perhaps thirty-five, with gray eyes which seemed ever to be filled with a calm surprise, and a mouth rather wide but having lips so full and so finely curved that one easily forgot its offence against perfect symmetry. She said little, met every one's glances, and, without making any appeal, inclined one unconsciously in her favor. Assuring her of the pleasure I felt in serving a daughter of John Codman, she replied, with quiet confidence, as her great eyes took me in from top to toe,—

"'He was a good judge of a man.'

"That was all, and, though her look seemed to confirm her father's judgment, I never felt less flattered in my life. There was none of the air of compliment about it. It was simply a statement that I was engaged for service, not from sentiment.

"I do not know why I should have felt piqued by this reply, but I certainly did. I could see that it attracted Mr. Buford's attention, and he glanced at me with a look of quiet inquiry, as if taking stock of my value. It was evident that he was surprised to see us meet as entire strangers and to learn that in retaining me she had been controlled by judgment rather than impulse.

"Little was said about the case. The trial was set for Thursday morning, and when Mr. Buford said, inquiringly, 'I suppose we are ready?' I noticed that her face took on a thoughtful look and her mouth assumed a firmer expression as she replied,—

“‘So far as I know, we are.’

“An hour later a note written in a light nervous hand was brought, asking me to dine with Mrs. Ainsworth the next evening, if convenient. I handed it to Mr. Buford.

“‘Well,’ said he, with a smile, ‘you will go, of course?’

“‘I think not,’ I answered.

“‘Why? She evidently desires to consult with you before the trial.’

“‘Probably; but I have possessed myself of your views; I could learn nothing more of value; and it is not well that we should enter upon the trial with conflicting hypotheses or a half-independent plan of action.’

“‘But perhaps she desires to consult you upon other matters,—to talk of her father, whom you seem to have known.’

“‘That can wait.’

“The matter was not mentioned again, and we had no more conversation upon the case. During the next two days I consulted our witnesses and briefed their evidence, so that by the time the case was called I felt that I thoroughly understood its strength and weakness.

“I had already learned that my associate was one of the most noted and successful trial-lawyers of the State. Perhaps the fact that I never excelled in this direction and never hoped to has enabled me to appreciate this attribute all the more highly in others. When the judge called ‘Ainsworth vs. Ainsworth’ at ten o’clock on Thursday morning, Mr. Buford was at once transformed from the smiling easy companion into the alert and eager gladiator.

“‘That is our case, Mr. Gauge,’ he said, in a tone that betrayed his delight in the coming conflict.

“We took our places opposite the jury-box, our client next to Mr. Buford, while I sat in a chair at the end of the table, so that she had a counsellor on either hand, while it was yet easy for us to consult together by merely leaning forward across the corner of the table. Our opponents sat at my left, directly in front of Mr. Buford, who made it a rule never to fight an enemy except at point-blank range. Our witnesses were called and answered, and we announced that the proponent was ready to proceed. The counsel for the contestants did the same; the jury was impanelled, and Mr. Buford opened with one of the most lucid and masterly statements I ever heard. Our witnesses were there and sworn, and my associate said,—

“‘Our first piece of evidence, if your honor please, will be the alleged holograph itself. Will you let me have it, Mr. Clerk?’

“‘It is among the papers,’ said that functionary, pointing to the bundle on our table.

“‘I think not,’ said Mr. Buford, running over the file.

“Then the clerk came and examined the papers carefully, turning inquiringly to the counsel for the contestants when he failed to find the required document.

“‘None of us have it,’ said the senior of our opponents, with urbane placidity.

“Then the clerk made further search among the papers in his

pockets, and was rebuked by the court for leaving such an important document among the ordinary files.

“‘You had better introduce a copy and proceed,’ said the judge. ‘The original will probably turn up before the evidence is all in.’”

“The defendants, of course, objected, and Mr. Buford seemed for once at a loss what to do.

“‘If your honor please——’ he began, with some hesitation.

“I reached across and touched his hand. He bent towards me, and I said,—

“‘I have a copy which I took the trouble to verify.’”

“A look of relief came into his eyes, but not a muscle of his calm, colorless face betrayed his feeling.

“‘That is what I was about to ask permission to do,’ he continued, without change of tone. ‘Will your honor swear the clerk?’”

“This was done, and, having proved by the clerk and his deputy that a paper-writing purporting to be the last will and testament of Matthew Ainsworth had been duly filed, and the copy I produced having been duly verified, we asked leave to set it up as a lost will.

“The defendant’s counsel again objected, but the court permitted us to proceed. The witnesses on both sides had examined the original, and all but one or two pronounced it wholly in the testator’s handwriting. These, not without apparent misgiving, inclined to a contrary opinion. The chief controversy was as to the place where it was found, the time of finding, and the disappearance of the former will. The examination of the proponent was very severe.

“She was asked in regard to her past life, and frankly admitted that she had quarrelled with her father while yet a school-girl, had run away from home, and had assumed the name of Robards to prevent detection. She had supported herself by teaching in various localities, and had finally come South and taught in several families before meeting Mr. Ainsworth. Her past had not been an easy or a pleasant one, and she disliked anything that reminded her of it. She had been very happy with her husband. Their tastes had not always been the same, but she had derived the utmost enjoyment from co-operating with him and carrying out his purposes. She thought no one would question that she had been of use to him; and for her part she found it impossible to realize that he was dead: in fact, she could not help thinking of him as alive. She had received several letters from him after his departure, but no communications by mail since the accident to the steamer. The last was from Chicago. She had them all, if they wished to examine them. She had not shown them to her counsel, not supposing it necessary. Her husband had frequently expressed an intention to remove to the North. He was ambitious to engage in the struggle for wealth at the West. In his last letter he had declared his intention to free his slaves, provide for their future, and, with what might be left of his estate, engage in business in Chicago. She had never encouraged this purpose. She was quite contented to live as they had done, not feeling like encouraging him to exchange a certainty for an uncertainty. In regard to the loss of the will she knew nothing. She had seen it for a moment, in my hands or those of the

deputy clerk, on Monday of the term. We were reading, at least one was reading,—comparing it with a copy, she thought. She could not remember which had the will. She had not seen it since. In reply to a question, she said she thought her husband relied greatly upon her judgment: she did not recollect that he had ever neglected her advice in any important matter.

“On the whole, her testimony and demeanor were simply perfect. She disarmed every prejudice, and exhibited the utmost frankness. So fine a combination of shrewdness and candor I had never seen. She seemed to have divined exactly what would benefit her case, and set it forth in the most artless and natural manner imaginable. I felt I had wronged her by my suspicion, and would have found it difficult to express my admiration for her. Mr. Buford did not attempt to conceal his. She did not hesitate, nor involve herself in any inconsistency. The result was that the court held with us as to the sufficiency of the depository,—the only question in the case which I argued,—and the jury decided in our favor all the facts necessary to support the holograph.

“The next day I visited our client, took her instructions as to certain matters of business, and, with several others, passed the night at her house, whence it had been arranged that a hunting-party should start on the morrow. I was at first given one of the great front rooms, but after the other guests began to arrive was asked by the hostess herself if I would be willing to occupy a chamber which was just above that known as her husband’s room, which Mr. Buford had described to me. She explained, with apparent candor, that no one had occupied it since her husband’s disappearance, and she did not like to give it to a stranger.

“The room I was to occupy was in a part of the great country-house which had been added to the original structure by the recent owner after his marriage. It was somewhat more ornate than the older portion, but by no means as well constructed. The floor, as was customary in that region, was uncarpeted, and there were yawning crevices beneath the base-boards, especially at the rear, caused by the sinking of the foundation, and also about the hearth in front of the fireplace.

“We had a very pleasant evening, the hostess and some ladies of the remoter branches of her husband’s family—who adhered to her cause apparently because of her devotion to his memory, but in fact because the setting aside of the will would benefit others rather than themselves—contributing not a little to our enjoyment. Mr. Buford arrived during the evening, and, to my surprise, was assigned with another gentleman to the room I had at first occupied.

“It was not late when we retired, for the horn was to sound early in the morning. I fell asleep at once, and slept quietly until awakened by voices in the room below,—one apparently that of a man, the other unmistakably that of a woman. I did not mean to listen; indeed, there was no need to do so to learn that the latter was unquestionably the voice of my client. She spoke without any restraint, clearly and distinctly,—so clearly, indeed, that I first thought she must be in the room where I was. The man’s voice was curiously muffled and indistinct.

I was sure it was not one I knew, and I became strangely confused as I thought I might be acting the spy upon a midnight meeting of a character by no means creditable to the parties or listeners. Then it flashed upon me that this woman whom I had all along distrusted had placed me here in order that I might be a witness for her and against her paramour. This I thought was the reason she spoke so loud, while her companion took such pains to muffle his tones.

"I was not allowed any opportunity to doubt the character of the clandestine meeting to which I was an unwilling listener. Her conversation was plentifully garnished with words of extravagant endearment. There was laughter, too, the sweet contented laughter of a loving woman,—the man did not laugh,—and kisses! You may guess how I flushed with shame as I heard them. I do not know that I was surprised,—hardly anything this woman could have done would have surprised me,—but I was mortified beyond expression at the thought that she had made a fool of me. Which one of my companions of the morrow was it that she was making the victim of her wiles? I did not know, and determined that I would not. Just as I reached this conclusion, she addressed him by name. Somehow the name seemed familiar, but I could not recall which of her guests would answer to it. I soon became aware that she was telling her companion about the trial. She spoke of me with plain, cool commendation, as one who 'thought of the right thing at the right time,' told him what instructions she had given me, and asked his approval. Everything had happened, she said, just as her companion had predicted. She then asked his wishes in regard to other matters, and finally, before I had time to overcome my confusion, I heard her pleading with him not to go. She called him 'dear,' 'beloved,' 'husband,' and implored him in the most impassioned tones to remain. Then I heard her begging him to forgive her for some wrong she had done him; again she called him by name,—his Christian name,—Matthew! How tenderly and reverently she uttered it!

"'Oh, Matthew—Matthew Ainsworth, if you knew how I love you,—how truly I have always loved you,—you would never leave me,—you would never have left me!'

"'Good heavens!' I thought, 'it is her husband,—the man whose will was yesterday sustained by the court!' Yet if he were alive it could not be his will.

"The position in which I now found myself was hardly less discreditable than that in which I thought myself placed by witnessing an illicit amour. What was my duty? I was of counsel and had been instrumental in procuring a curious result,—the probate of a living man's will! Of course there was an appeal, and the wrong might yet be prevented; but what sort of a position would I be placed in if I attempted it? Would I ever be believed? Besides that, *cui bono*? If the testator and his devisee saw fit to play such a game, why should I object? They undoubtedly had their reasons for it. At least it was their business, and not mine. The lady was my client, and, though what had been done was contrary to all legal morality, yet, as no one had any right to complain at a husband and wife playing such a

game with what was their own, I concluded to say nothing about it, but be careful that this strange woman, with her great wondering eyes, did not get me into any worse difficulty. I had agreed to undertake certain matters for her,—nothing less than the purchase of lands in Ohio on which to settle the slaves she was to free. There could be no harm in this. Yet I resolved even in this to be very careful, and to decline all further business. You see, I was pretty cautious even then.”

A smile went round the little group at the allusion to what was sometimes regarded as his special failing.

“I had intended to remain at Edgewood for several days, but this incident made me anxious to leave as soon as possible. The arrival of the mail the next day after the morning run gave me the opportunity. I was not much of a horseman, but I was reared in the country and had learned as a boy to stay on a horse. I had borne myself well enough in the hunt to merit the commendation of those who were experienced, and could therefore quit without imputation. There was to be a deer-hunt in the afternoon. After glancing over my letters, I announced that I must leave the next morning. After the failure of various efforts to induce me to change my determination, my hostess said that as I would have to leave early, and she wished to consult with me upon business, she would interpose her veto against my going on the hunt and ask me to give her the afternoon.

“So it was that after the noonday meal I was ushered into the room her husband had occupied and given a great leather-bottomed rocker on one side of a smouldering fire, on which the hickory ashes lay heaped and white. The morning had been chill, and the hint of artificial warmth that filled the room was very grateful. My hostess sat on the other side of the hearth, near her husband’s desk. She was certainly one of the most attractive women I have ever met. The only thing that seemed odd about her was that she held nothing in her hands. They did not even caress each other. I do not remember any other woman whom I have ever known to sit down for a consultation without something to occupy her hands while she gave her mind to business.

“I was curious to know why I had heard so plainly what had gone on in this room the night before, and almost before seating myself was exploring the ceiling to discover the cause. It was not difficult to perceive the reason. The room was ceiled with the clear heart-pine of that region, but around the sides was a pretentious cornice, from the brackets of which hung pictures, trophies of the chase, and other relics of the departed. It was evident that the bungling carpenter had only run the ceiling-boards out under the edge of the cornice, leaving the open space behind to act in connection with the cracks below the base-boards in the room above as an ever-ready speaking-tube between the two. In a sense it was a very delightful room. There was in it that air of masculine domination which marked it as a man’s especial realm, while the evidences of a woman’s presence were sufficiently numerous to show that it had long been subject to joint occupancy. I saw at a glance the secret of my client’s power over her husband. She had subordinated herself wholly to his interest and happiness. The room had been built opening off the bedchamber as a boudoir for her; she had made it a

smoking- and lounging-room for him, counting herself only as one of its movable attractions.

"She noticed my scrutiny, and said, with a smile, but without any trace of embarrassment,—

"‘Did you hear anything unusual last night?’

"I admitted with a shrug that perhaps my rest had not been undisturbed.

"‘I can understand,’ she replied, with a quiet dignity, ‘that it must seem very strange to you. I do not understand it myself, and, as I thought I ought to have advice upon the matter, I concluded to trust you rather than Mr. Buford; not that I lack confidence in him, but somehow I would rather not speak of the matter to one living here. If you heard what occurred here last night,’ she continued, as if stating the most ordinary event, ‘you are already aware that Matthew—my husband—visited me; and I may say to you that he comes every night, is as pleasant and natural as ever, but I cannot induce him to sit down or stay. He is tender and loving, but seems grieved at something I have done. For a while I locked the door, but every night he came and tapped on the window as he used to do when he came home late. So now I leave the door open, and he comes and goes at will. He has advised me in all this matter. I did not wish to do it, because I could not swear I thought him dead, you see; but others think so, and he gets terribly angry if I speak of betraying him. So, too, I could not say I had received no letters from him since his supposed death. You noticed that I merely said that I had had no communication with him by mail since that time. Why, I get letters from him almost every night. He brings one, and I find it on the desk in the morning. Here they are,’ she said, taking up a package from the desk. ‘There is one I received this morning. You see I am doing just what he advises.’

"She handed me an open letter as she spoke. I started with surprise. It was undoubtedly the same handwriting as the will. I had seen other specimens of Mr. Ainsworth’s writing, too, and could not mistake it. It counselled the most implicit confidence in my judgment and directed her to follow my advice in all things. I could not but smile at the reasons given for this: they were sound enough, but by no means such as my vanity would have dictated.

"‘Well,’ she asked, with a smile, ‘what shall I do? You see I am put in your charge with no more discretion than if I were a baby. I don’t understand it. It is not like Matthew to do so; but I suppose he has his reasons, and I have never failed to comply with any wish of his.’

"I did not know what to make of the woman or her story.

"‘Will you let me see his letters?’ I asked.

"‘Certainly,’ she replied. ‘There they are. You will find some love in them, perhaps, but you will excuse that. Matthew has never ceased to be a lover.’

"There were tears in her eyes as she spoke.

"‘And now may I go and think?’ I asked, with the letters in my hand.

"‘You may *stay* and think,’ she rejoined, with a smile. ‘I will go.’

"She rose as she spoke, but still hesitated. She had taken a handkerchief from her pocket to wipe her eyes, and now stood wadding it up and picking it apart as she said,—

"He has told me to trust you implicitly and tell you everything. I suppose I ought to do it; but it is very hard. I shall have to tell you what I never told him, but what he seems to have found out. I was married before I met him; *and my husband is still alive!*"

"She cast down her eyes and grew deathly pale as she spoke these words.

"But you were divorced?" I said.

"She shook her head, but did not answer. While I stood stupefied with amazement, she stepped silently backward into her own room, and I heard the bolt shot into its place as the door closed.

"The fact which she had stated seemed a solution of the whole mystery. The devoted husband, having discovered that his marriage was void, had become anxious only to extricate the woman he loved from her perilous position, and for that purpose had devised all that had seemed so unnatural and mysterious. The letters confirmed this impression. They advised her day by day and step by step. He had renounced his place as her husband, but did not seek to hide his love. He evidently trusted me, and desired me to help him care for and save from peril and disgrace the woman he loved.

"A tender regard for this great self-sacrificing nature awoke in my heart as I read the letters. Could I help him? I reviewed the situation. I could not make myself a party to a fraud; but was this fraud? I could not quite understand why he should take the course he had, but he had an unquestioned right to do as he saw fit. I decided to do as he wished. At the same time, I had an irrepressible desire to see this wonderful man. I thought I could help him more effectively if I could talk with him face to face a few minutes. I wondered where he kept himself concealed in this neighborhood where he was so well known. His presence, of course, accounted for one of the missing wills,—perhaps for both. Well, I would help him in his own way.

"When I had reached this conclusion, I tapped on her door. After a moment she entered, her face flushed, but composed and tranquil. For the first time, I felt a real sympathy for her.

"You must have suffered greatly," I said.

"She drew a long breath, as if relieved from suspense. 'Words cannot express what I have endured.'

"Your husband,—Robards—?"

"That is his middle name," she said, in a tone as hard as steel. "He is a villain," she added, 'the most infamous villain that ever lived!'

"Can nothing be done—with him?"

"She shook her head.

"Does he know where you are?"

"He thinks me dead. You see, I was drowned, and an inquest held over me," she answered, 'after I escaped from him. That is the word,—*escaped*. I meant to die,—and would have died but for my daughter. Somebody did die and was buried in my stead. There is the account of it.'

"She handed me a newspaper slip as she spoke, containing an account of a celebrated disappearance the horror of which I well remembered.

" 'You see I am mad as well as dead,' she added, bitterly.

" 'And your daughter?' I asked.

" 'The woman in whose care I left her no doubt believed the account of my death. Before I dared communicate with her, she too disappeared. I have tried to find her, but cannot. Oh, my child! my child!'

"I pitied the woman all the more that she did not stoop to rail against her husband or excuse herself. She told what was absolutely necessary to tell, offering no apology or explanation. She was not thinking of herself or me, but only of the man she loved and the child she had lost.

" 'And how much of this did you tell your husband,—Ainsworth, I mean?'

" 'Not—one—word,' she replied, positively.

" 'Very well,' I said. 'I will do what I can.'

"She crossed to the door that led into the sitting-room, opened it, and I passed out.

"That night I again heard the conversation in the room below. It occurred to me that I might as well have an interview with my unknown client and tell him a thing or two. So I slipped on my clothes and stole carefully down the stairs. As I expected, I found the sitting-room unlocked, and, turning the knob, I looked in. I have seen a good many curious things, but what I saw that night surprised me more than anything else it has been my fortune to meet with.

"The room was brilliantly lighted. At the desk sat Mrs. Ainsworth, clad in a white wrapper, her face aglow with happiness, chattering away to a portrait of her husband that stood before her and answering herself in a voice so changed that it was no wonder I had not recognized it. While I stood with the door ajar, transfixed with wonder at what I saw, she ceased to talk and began to write. Satisfied of her condition, a new question arose in my mind. Did she write the letters I have read? and, if so, who wrote the will?

"Slipping into the room, I closed the door and stepped forward until I could see over her shoulder. One glance was enough: it was the exact counterpart of her husband's handwriting! After watching her a few moments, I stole back to bed, more puzzled than ever. People did not talk so glibly about spiritual influence then as they do now, but I must confess that something of the kind occurred to me as the only explanation of the riddles I had seen. After all, it was only a woman's love and a woman's woe working on a woman's conscience,—a conscience keener than a Damascus blade in sleep and duller than a Bushman's cleaver when awake. This was my conclusion as I fell asleep.

" 'I am going to advise Mrs. Ainsworth to go North very soon,' I said to Mr. Buford as I met him the next morning.

" 'And I should advise you to go at once,' was his placid reply.

" 'I'm going, of course,' I said, lightly; 'but why should you advise it?'

“‘I understand you were seen coming from a lady’s room last night,’ he answered, icily.

“‘I think I hardly flushed at this insinuation. ‘And is this the reason you advise my going?’

“‘Certainly.’

“‘Then I will stay.’

“‘As you please,’ was his careless reply.

“‘Mr. Buford,’ I said, ‘I don’t know much about your code of honor, but I *do* know that common decency requires that a man should not run away and leave a woman to suffer detraction unjustly on his account. Nothing has ever passed between this woman and myself that every one is not welcome to know. I wish I could tell you all I have learned; but I am bound in honor not to do so. What occurred last night was this. I heard, as I thought, two voices in the room below. I had reason to suspect that something was wrong. I went down and looked in. What I saw was a woman worshipping her husband’s portrait in her sleep,—laughing at it, talking at it as if alive,—as she really believes him to be. I shall advise her to go North by water from Richmond, because if this thing keeps up she will surely die. She must have fresh surroundings,—new associations.’

“‘Is this true?’ asked Buford, keenly.

“‘Every word.’

“‘I am glad to believe it,’ he replied, with dignity, ‘and beg your pardon for my unjust remark. I am the only one who knows what happened.’

“‘And you?’ I asked, with sudden suspicion.

“‘I heartily approve your plan, sir,’ was the reply.”

“‘What became of her?’ asked Minton, when the Senior paused.

“‘Oh, she disposed of the estate, came North, emancipated the slaves, and invested the remnant of the proceeds in Chicago real estate. I did most of her business for several years,—always against Burrill’s protest. You see, she used to send me letters from her husband, advising the most unexpected transactions, which always turned out well. At first she no doubt believed that he was alive and that these letters were veritable messages from him. She made no effort to verify this belief, but just waited for him to proclaim himself openly. At length I ventured to tell her what I knew. The shock was very great. She put on mourning, and her beautiful brown hair soon became gray. Still the letters continued. She did not lose any faith in their verity, but counted them as ghostly communications from the man she mourned as dead. Her hand, she said, was guided by his spirit. She attested her sincerity by making good to the contestants what they had lost by the will. It is amazing how accurate these mysterious prognostications were. She obeyed them in everything, and prospered wonderfully under spiritual guidance.”

“‘Spiritual!’ echoed Burrill, with a sneer.

“‘Burrill never would believe in their celestial origin,” said the Senior, with a significant smile, “and never touched the papers except by my express command. For years I did almost all the work myself, just to save his prejudices.”

"I've no fancy for the devil's billet-doux," said Burrill, with a shrug.

"Did you ever learn what became of her husband?" I asked.

"Which one?"

"I meant Ainsworth," I replied, "though the other was really her husband, I suppose."

"Yes, undoubtedly. She was neither Ainsworth's wife nor legatee. Her husband died a few years after, without any suspicion that his wife was still alive."

"I suppose no one ever learned what really became of Ainsworth?" said Minton, reflectively.

"He died the other day, and, as I am the custodian of his will, I have just been summoned to produce it in Chicago. I shall have to send some one, as I cannot leave the city for a week or more."

"Not me, sir!" said Burrill, excitedly pushing the papers away from him. "I've had enough of the devil's business. I thought you dropped the whole thing long ago."

"So I did," said the Senior, with a laugh; "but one day, about the beginning of the civil war, a man came in and inquired for me. As it happened, I was the only one in the office. He wore a uniform,—said he was under orders to go to the front; and wanted to execute his will. It was already drawn, he said, but he would like me to see that it was in due form and have it properly attested. I opened the paper he handed me, and was horrified to recognize the familiar handwriting of the ghostly missives. Turning to the signature, I saw the name Matthew Ainsworth. He refused to answer any questions, but, seeing in whose favor the instrument was drawn, I told him all I knew about the woman he had thought his wife. I shall never forget the light that came into his face as he realized the devotion of the woman he loved to his memory. 'Quick!' he exclaimed; 'the witnesses!' Then, looking at his watch, he declared that he had still time to see her before his leave expired if he caught the next train. I called a couple of friends from an adjoining office, saw the will attested, and left with him for Chicago an hour afterwards. They were married on our arrival. It was a great shock for her to learn that the man she had dreamed of as watching over her from the spirit-world had in truth been doggedly working and prospering in the same city, quite unconscious of her presence near him. Yes, he had made a slight change of name: he was called Ensworth instead of Ainsworth. It was by what she said in her sleep that he first obtained an inkling as to the secrets of her previous life, and when he found the evil incurable he just took himself out of the way, never expecting to see her again, but loving her just as much as ever. After that we had no business from her until this morning I was summoned to produce the will. As it happens, I cannot go, and Burrill won't: so I think you must, Mr. Minton." The Senior turned inquiringly towards him as he spoke.

"Just as you say," replied Minton, nonchalantly beginning to put his desk in order. "I suppose there is no time to lose?"

"Well, no," answered the Senior, deliberately, "though there is no special haste. Of course there will have to be a commission to take

testimony before the will can be admitted to probate, and you may have to remain there several weeks. Why not take your wife along and have a good time?"

"I should like to do that," said Minton, his face lighting up with pleasure.

"All right. Here is a check for expenses," said Mr. Gauge. "You may as well use it all."

Minton seemed about to protest, but the Senior said, laughingly,—
"It won't hurt you, and she can afford it. Send a message to your wife, and get off as soon as you can."

"I'll do it," said Mr. Minton, as he put on his coat and went out.

"He's a good fellow," said the Senior, watching his retreating figure,—"a good fellow,—and I'm sorry to lose him."

"Lose him!" ejaculated Burrill.

Mr. Gauge laughed, and laid a telegram on the desk before the old clerk :

"Send Minton with will. Have him bring wife. Draft by mail.
"LUELLA ENSWORTH."

"Put it with the papers and seal them up," said the Senior, as he started for his own room. "Ainsworth *vs.* Ainsworth is finally closed."

"I don't know about that," muttered Burrill, as he tied up the package. "What do you suppose the old cat means, ordering Minton and his wife sent to her by express, like a couple of packages she has bought and paid for? Didn't the old man do it neatly, though?" he added, with sudden appreciation of the skill the Senior had shown in complying with the request. "Oh, he's sharp! He never makes mistakes in anything,—big or little!"

Albion W. Tourgee.

FATHER'S CHILD.

MY little girl to-night with childish glee,
Although her months had numbered not twoscore,
Escaped her nurse, and, at my study door,
With tiny fingers rapping, spoke to me :
Though faint her words, I heard them tremblingly
Fall from her lips, as if the darkness bore
Its weight upon her : "Father's child." No more
I waited for, but straightway willingly
I brought the sweet intruder into light
With happy laughter. Even so some night,
When, from the nursing earth escaped and free,
My soul shall try in her first infant flight
To seek God's chamber, these two words shall be
Those that will make Him ope His door to me.

R. T. W. Duke, Jr.

THE ENDOWMENT OF GENIUS.

FOR many years I have entertained an idea which I supposed was wholly original, and which, when I arrive at great wealth, I shall wish to make concrete and practical. The fact that people generally would be likely to consider it fantastic and impracticable will partly account for the silence I have so long shrouded it in. But there are really, as I find, very few original ideas in the world,—perhaps not any that are wholly original. The soil of thought, in fact, has been so thoroughly ploughed and pulverized, it was hardly worth while to have entertained the notion that any private thought or scheme has not had a previous, or simultaneous, lodgment in some other brain. As I find at last that I am not likely to be a millionaire, and the thought I had kept so long sequestered has dawned partially to another writer, there will be no harm now in making this disclosure.

My idea was that it would be a good thing if some man of wealth who is casting about for some worthy object on which to bestow a few surplus thousands should remember that in this country, and in all others where civilization prevails, there are a certain few whom nature has set apart for special work which the best equipped of all the multitude besides can never undertake or help in doing. All the millionaires in Europe could not, for instance, have written Coleridge's poem of "The Ancient Mariner," or Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark," or Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn."

Neither could they, or the educated class itself, or the kings and generals of the world, have done the work which fell to Robert Burns. But the men of wealth could have made this work easier; they could have prevented Otway from starving and Goldsmith from being pinched and bitten by wolfish poverty. How gladly they would now do this if these men were now alive and struggling, and it were well known that moderate financial help would not only save them from direct hardships, but would make them capable of doing more of their best work!

I have drawn my names from those of the poets' craft, but I do not mean to say that they are the only men of genius. There are great scientists, and great artists, and great physicists, and great physiologists, and great inventors, and great explorers, who might well be helped by some system of financial endowment. Of course the help should be given under some understood system or rule, which should not be mere personal patronage, or have an almsy flavor,—though it might be wholly done for one person who is a proved genius by one other person who is a man of wealth and willingness. Why should it be considered more ridiculous to endow a man than to endow the university chair a man occupies?—or than to endow a university itself?

The latter is done freely, and the professor who draws his salary, and the pupils who receive more cheaply their tuition, by reason of such endowments, do not feel pauperized by their benefits. Why, then, should a man who is doing special work for the world in a larger sense

than any university be loath to accept his living so as to be free to pursue it? Or why should a millionaire of true perceptions and benevolent impulses not delight just as much to endow a genius when he is sure he has found one, as to make any other provision of beneficence?

The man of genius, to pursue his work fitly, needs a perfect abstraction from merely material cares. If he could make money easily, he has—as Agassiz had—no time to do so, and generally he lacks the faculty to do so. The problem of his life is a double one. It is both ideal and practical. He wishes to drive the horses of the sun, but the road-cart or farm-cart consumes all his time. If his dealings in the sky or with Pegasus were purely a private matter, like the rich man's yacht or horses or hounds, we could well enough afford to let him alone. But he is working his celestial aims for satisfactions and results that belong to, and will go directly for the benefit of, the whole human race. There is no work that any millionaire can possibly leave behind, no single enterprise that even a government can further, that will bear a moment's comparison in its importance with the legacy Wordsworth, say, or Raphael, has contributed to the world.

It would be no extravagance to say that the measure of culture and human benefit that has flowed to mankind already from that one artist, Raphael, is beyond computation in figures or words. But the stream of influence is nowise lessened by what has been given from it, but will go on to the end of time. No one suspected when he was at work, four hundred years ago, what a force had come into the world, and no one can imagine how many others of analogous benefit might have come, but were crushed by the material impediments of practical life.

With the great multitude of men who have no highly unique and special vocation life is mainly a struggle for material place and power, or for the comfortable necessities of existence. Even this is hard enough; but, when our few of finer mould are compelled to add this struggle to the one necessary to their chosen pursuit, it is no wonder so many "mute inglorious Miltons" fall by the way. Ought there not, then, to be some method applied, whereby the same care can be bestowed upon a grand man that we would bestow upon a rare treasure of some other sort? We cannot secure the great man's arrival; but when he has come we can show that we know him and appreciate him, as the bees know and appreciate the one who is, of all others, most valuable to the hive. When "Dexter"—was it not?—was found drawing a clay-cart, and the signs of speed in him were unmistakable, what a world of excitement there was! No harness was too fine, no stable too good for him. He had valets to attend his most delicate wants, watchers by night and by day. I do not say there was the slightest inappropriateness in this. I merely ask if the man of wonderful possibilities is not of as much account, and deserving of as much care, as the wonderful horse.

The great man, or man of genius, will forego yachts and palaces and the muniments of wealth, though he could enjoy them. What he needs at once and mainly is that sure provision which shall give him subsistence and leave him free from worldly toil and worry,—as a prerequisite to prosecuting his work. If some millionaire could see this,

who is willing to further the interests of society by some moderate donation only, he could set some one struggling genius free, and not only do immense good thereby, but he could set also a brilliant example towards well-doing to others of his class.

A writer in the *Nation* who, not long ago, simply anticipated my idea in part, says, in pleading for "the endowment of private research," that no one can doubt that "mental power is a great endowment. Huxley has well said that any country would find it greatly to its profit to spend a hundred thousand dollars in first finding a Faraday, and then putting him in a position in which he could do the greatest possible amount of work. A man of genius is so valuable a product that he ought to be secured at all cost; to be kept like a queen-bee in a hot-house, fed upon happiness, and stimulated in every way to the greatest possible activity. To expose him to the same harsh treatment which is good for the hod-carrier and the bricklayer is to indulge in a reckless waste of the means of a country's greatness." Again he says, "The waste of water-power at Niagara is as nothing compared with the waste of brain-power which results from compelling a man of exceptional qualifications to earn his own living."

Now, it may be hard to start a Mæcenas-guild of the kind I recommend, and which this writer has struck the entering-wedge towards providing; but it should not be impossible. There is no objection to it that cannot be urged against any other form of public beneficence. If there should be a mistake made sometimes in selecting your man of genius, there are often fearful mistakes made in bestowing funds to other endowments. A considerable part of the money which goes, with the best of motives, to endow existing churches, results simply in making lazy and penurious Christians in the localities so favored. It is a fact, too, with every good scheme that it may miscarry now and then. But let us not abandon a good idea because it requires delicacy and circumspection in its embodiment. For fraud seems to have the faculty of masking itself everywhere, and nowhere as successfully as where the cause is a superlatively good one.

The "waste of water-power at Niagara" may be deemed a somewhat striking figure, but it is none too expressive. Nothing can be too expressive to show how our superlative mind-power, or power of genius, is wasted. One of the men capable of doing the finest literary work done in this country goes into a financial bedlam year after year to make his living, and does it. But he must work, too, when others sleep, to do the tasks that he was specially ordained for,—tasks for which all time is far too brief. Another is using his life up by hack-work at a newspaper-desk, whose name, in spite of this and of ill health, is close linked with the best literature of this country. A certain inventor whom I knew—and he was among the most famous—almost starved himself and family for years, and more than once pawned his wife's shawl for a baking of flour, so that he could go on with his experiments. But this list is too long to tell. Others who might be named are now wasting the most precious time in the world to do the tasks which a hod-carrier can do, and which a moderate financial endowment would release them from to the immediate furtherance of their divinely appointed work.

We do not use rosewood and mahogany to make our hoe-handles and ploughs of, but we do set our finest brains to, or force them into, tasks that are an inexcusable and lavish waste and a bereavement to the world. Suppose Shakespeare, for instance, had not happened to be thrifty. He might have died holding horses at the door of the theatre, and the world would have lost what the failure of Columbus to discover America—if he had failed—is a weak parallel to represent. Who can estimate how many Hamlets and Othellos, even as the case was with Shakespeare, may have been left unwritten by the assumption on his part of coarse and worldly tasks which were necessary to make the pot boil, and to secure the coveted home at Stratford? How pathetic to remember that a great author wrote one of his most charming and classical works, in headlong haste, to obtain the sum necessary to defray his mother's funeral expenses! If Charles Lamb could have been saved from the direful drudgery of his long and dreary clerkship, what a measureless fund of new and additional delights he might have bequeathed to the world! A million men might have filled his place at the India House; but who, besides himself, could have produced the least one of his unique and incomparable essays? Perhaps even Poe would have done more with a fair endowment, and not have left the world a lamentable mind-wreck and piteous example. In an age when science has brought material economies into high prominence by every device and invention, must we sit down calmly and say that there is no way to prevent the most precious material in the world from appalling waste and destruction? Surely there ought to be some provision whereby such stupendous calamities may be made impossible, or a little less possible; for no doubt they have always taken place,—only, when they do, we do not always know it. The iceberg strikes the ship, and it never comes to port. Against the iceberg, to be sure, there is no remedy, but to the obstacles that beset the man of genius a thousand purses in every large community could easily apply the extinguisher.

But the controller of a purse must first see this; as the deserving recipient of an endowment, by the very nature of the case, can make no sign. He will go on with his work imperfectly, or give it up in despair. So far as *he* is concerned, even in this case, no favor need be asked. But the cause of civilization and of mankind is closely bound up with the life and work of this one man's mind in a way that mere millions of money do not begin to represent. Can we afford that the treasure so enclosed shall be either impaired or lost? What greater glory can a wealthy man desire than to have been Mæcenas when Virgil lived? What greater task can he set himself to-day than to yield up a sum insignificant to him, in order that some other Virgil may make human life better for twenty, or for endless, centuries to come?

Joel Benton.

OUR MONTHLY GOSSIP

WITH READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

C. R. R. asks, "What is the meaning of Printers' Pi?"

Pi or Pie, a printers' term used to designate a mass of confused or overthrown types, and plausibly derived from the Pica or Pie, the Romish Ordinal or Service Book which gave its name to the type known as Pica, and of which the preface to the English Book of Common Prayer complains that "the number and hardness of the rules called the *pie* was the cause that to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter that many times there was more business to find out what should be read than to read it when it was found out."

C. G. asks, "Who, or what, is 'Rabagas'? The word is much used in O'Connor's 'Life of Parnell' as an epithet of scorn and disgust."

Rabagas is the hero and title of a five-act comedy by Victorien Sardou, first produced at the Vaudeville in Paris, February, 1872. The satire is directed against Gambetta and Emile Ollivier, the hero being a compound of both. The scene is laid in Monaco. Rabagas, a demagogue who flatters the passions of the multitude, but only wants to get into power to gratify his snobbish love of rank, is won over by cheap bribes and flattery to the side of the Duke, against whom he has plotted, becomes prime minister, and when the insurrection breaks out gives the order to shoot and imprison his old associates. Then comes a change in his fortunes: the Duke needs him no longer, the people hiss him. He is ousted from office, and leaves the stage with these words: "Adieu; I go to the only country where talents like mine are appreciated,—to France." The comedy, which is one of Sardou's masterpieces, was tumultuously received. "You may imagine," says an eye-witness in a letter to the *New York Nation*,—"you may imagine the mixed feelings of a French audience before such an exhibition: the Bonapartists have taken the theatre of the Vaudeville for their head-quarters, and they cheer for ten minutes such phrases as this: 'Quand une société est pourrie, l'avocat s'y met.' There is a comical account of the insurrection of Monaco, where one government is formed in a red room, another in a green room, another in a yellow room, and the green, red, and yellow governments successively proscribe each other. This transparent allusion to the scenes in the Hôtel de Ville on the 4th September, the 31st October, and the 18th March was cheered with fury. So far, those who hiss are in the minority, and the sergents-de-ville, whose comrades were killed under the Commune, and whose wives were fleeing for their lives at that period, show an energy in the repression of hisses which is not very surprising."

C. G. also asks, "What is the difference between a member and an *officier* of the French Academy? I have the impression that to be made an *officier* of the Academy is a very inferior distinction as compared with that of being a full *Academician*." Can any of our readers answer him?

THE Boston *Post* throws a little additional light upon a matter that has been under discussion in this department. "We note in the 'Monthly Gossip,'" it says, "a question as to the long-sought Spanish drama 'El Embozado,' mentioned by Medwin to Irving on the strength of his bad memory, and afterward repeated from this source *ad nauseam* by unscholarly writers who should have known better. There is no doubt that the correspondent is right, though he is not half positive enough in identifying this mythical drama with the well-known 'Purgatory of St. Patrick,' by Calderon, in which, if he will consult it, he will find *El Embozado* is a character. This is the play that Shelley read and which Medwin misremembered and so perplexed Irving and half a score of writers after him."

Lippincott's MONTHLY GOSSIP,—I have been greatly interested in your department of the magazine, and in talking over some items of its contents the other day with a friend, we drifted into mention of Tennyson's "Princess."

My friend, who is a great reader, asked, "From whom did Tennyson get his idea of that poem?" and asseverated he had found a very distinct outline of the "Princess" in another author of note.

Now, I cannot trace this, and my friend provokingly tells me, "Look till you do." But, having done what I could, so far, I apply to you for help, and am greatly

Your debtor,

C. F. ESTBRIDGE.

Your friend may have been thinking of the following passage in the last chapter of Johnson's "Rasselas:" "The Princess thought that of all sublunary things knowledge was the best. She desired first to learn all sciences, and then proposed to found a college of learned women, in which she would preside; that by conversing with the old and educating the young she might divide her time between the acquisition and communication of wisdom and raise up for the next age models of prudence and patterns of piety." But the idea of a university with "prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans," is at least as old as Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle's "A Female Academy," which she published in a volume with twenty other "Comedies" in 1662, but which was never acted. This volume is not obtainable in any library to which the Gossip has access. It would be interesting to know whether a copy can be found in any American library, so that a comparison might be instituted between Tennyson and the Duchess.

J. U. M. is informed that the novel and the play "La Dame aux Camélias" were both from the pen of Dumas fils, the novel being written first in 1848. The elder Dumas was opposed to its dramatization, but when the author had been shown the manuscript of a coarse melodrama, founded on his novel, he at once set to work on his own version. Theatre after theatre rejected it, however, and it was not till February 2, 1852, that it appeared at the Vaudeville in Paris, to run for a hundred nights or more. J. U. M.'s letter was received so late that his other question will have to remain unanswered until next month.

THE ONE HUNDRED PRIZE QUESTIONS.

THE series of questions for the best and fullest solutions to which prizes amounting to one hundred and seventy-five dollars were offered in our February number is continued in the following twenty questions:

41. What event is celebrated in Longfellow's "Hymn of the Moravian Nuns"?
42. Whence the expression "eating crow"?
43. Who was the original of Rebecca in "Ivanhoe"?
44. Whence the proverb "Blood is thicker than water"?
45. What city was destroyed by silence?
46. Whence the expression "It suits to a T"?
47. Who was the original Blue-Beard?
48. Whence the phrase "A tempest in a teapot"?
49. What is the origin of the name Mephistopheles?
50. Whence the expression "Dolce far niente"?
51. Where is Adam's Peak, and what legends cluster round it?
52. What was the name of the "simple village maiden" whom the "Lord of Burleigh" married?
53. What was the legend of the Seven Golden Cities?
54. Who was Herne the Hunter?
55. What is the origin of the weather-cock?
56. Whence the phrase "Good wine needs no bush"?
57. What is the origin of Harlequin?
58. Whence the expression "A little bird told me"?
59. What is a baker's dozen, and how did it originate?
60. Whence the proverb "A rolling stone gathers no moss"?

The Gossip regrets that an error crept into the first list of questions. Number 20, instead of reading, "What is the ceremony of Blessing the Pyx?" should read,—

No. 20. What is the ceremony of the Trial of the Pyx?

In answer to many inquiries, the Gossip would respectfully advise his correspondents that no fuller information can be vouchsafed to competitors than is already given in the questions themselves. To enter into a private correspondence with any one of them would manifestly be unfair to the others.

BOOK-TALK.

THE self-styled realistic novelists in America are fond of proclaiming themselves the advance-guard of a continuous literary movement which has culminated in "Daisy Miller" and "Silas Lapham." This is as it should be. The amiable delusion of all intellectual leaders is that to them has been intrusted the saying of the final and clinching word. But they lose sight of the great principle of action and reaction by which man's efforts are directed. The course of human thought runs in cycles. If one generation is poetical, imaginative, idealistic, the next is prosaic, critical, realistic; and *vice versa*. The age of great things done carelessly is followed by the age of small things done carefully; and *vice versa*. One generation considers the matter, the other the manner; one the value of the thing itself, the other the elegance of the setting.

An age of earnest and serious purpose is preceded as well as followed by an age of mockery or frivolity, an age of poetry by one of prose. The extravagant idealism of the early Spanish romances was succeeded by the humorous realism of "Don Quixote" and the picaresque novels. The careless strength and grandeur of the Elizabethan poets finds its contrast in the airy nothings, the elaborate felicities, of the Queen Anne men. The sonorous voices of the early Victorians have given place to the limpid tones of the later Victorians. Of course the general truth is but crudely indicated here. The classifications are not precise. A pioneer like Keats may appear before the reaction has set in, a veteran like Browning may survive to become the prophet of a new reaction. America has proved no exception to this general law. The literature which began with Washington Irving and other pleasant imitators of Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith soon broadened and deepened into the romance of Hawthorne, the philosophy of Emerson, the poetry of Walt Whitman, and is now reverting to its former tendencies in the elegant trifling of Howells and James. There are signs in the air that a new reaction will soon set in, or mayhap has already begun. But what will be the final outcome of the struggle, and whether, when Earth is wan and her cities have no sound nor tread, the Last Man shall stand amid the skeletons of nations with a romance or a realistic novel—with Hawthorne or Howells—in his hand,—these, indeed, are questions not lightly to be answered.

Evolution means progress, and where the vulgar eye sees only in the recurrence of similar phenomena the return of the wheels of being to the old groove, a deeper philosophical insight recognizes an infinitesimal gain at each new revolution. No great movement has been unmixed good. Every reaction frees the human mind from a small portion of the error that accompanied the original movement, while the error in the reaction calls in turn for elimination by a similar process.

Every thinking man has within him the possibility of becoming either an idealist or a realist, and not so much his own volition as the accident of birth and environment shall decide the question for him. Faust, whom Goethe makes the type of the aspiring nature in man, says of himself,—

Two souls, alas! reside within my breast,
And each withdraws from, and repels, its brother.
One with tenacious organs holds in love
And clinging lust the world in its embraces;
The other strongly sweeps his dust above
Into the high ancestral spaces.

Every thinking man at the outset of his career, at least, is conscious of this twofold soul. But whichever soul external forces may elect that he develop will be developed at the expense of the other. For "each withdraws from, and repels, its brother." Only by concentrating his energies within the mental and moral limitations of either one or the other can he hope to do any efficient work. To very few intellects, to here and there a Goethe or an Emerson, is it given to be at once symmetrical and strong. Most men purchase symmetry at the expense of strength, or strength at the expense of symmetry. For the intellectual leader strength is the prime requisite; he must sacrifice symmetry; he must be content to be a half man. If he becomes an idealist, he will hate and dislike the real; if

a realist, he will hate and dislike the ideal. Abstractly speaking, his hatred will be wrong. But the measure of our hatred is the measure of our love. A good hater is a more doughty warrior than an amiable pococurante. For the sake of the intense love which enables a great man to do his work, we pardon that hatred for all objects external to his range of vision by which he walls in his love and keeps it strong and deep. The fruits of love endure, they are brought forth in light and knowledge; the fruits of hatred perish, they are produced in darkness and ignorance.

A stern contempt for the simpler humanities of life has ever been the note of the idealist. He enshrouds himself in his own virtue, his stomach revolts at cakes and ale. We who dwell within earshot of the market, who live and move and have our being amid the Philistines, are repelled by the haughty language in which Plato, Schiller, Milton, or Carlyle speaks of the common folk whom we love and marry, whom we invite to our fireside, who are our brethren, our friends, our acquaintances, mayhap our taskmasters. We are repelled; yet in our saner moments we recognize that it is this haughtiness of attitude which keeps the poet and the seer unspotted from the world and enables them to do the thinking that shall purify the world. "It is not that we love to be alone," says Thoreau, "but that we love to soar; the company grows thinner and thinner till there is none at all. It is either the tribune on the plain, a sermon on the mount, or a very private ecstasy still higher up. We are none the less to aim at the summits, though the multitude does not ascend there." The saying has its truth, but not the whole truth. The ecstasy on the heights is excellent, but the sermon on the mount, the tribune on the plain, are likewise excellent. It is noble to soar, it is noble also to descend that we may meet. The message which the saint in his ecstasy has wrested from the infinite must be interpreted to the hundreds on the mount, to the thousands on the plain, otherwise it is of no worth. Doubtless it will be shorn of some part of its glory at each successive transmission, but if only a single ray reaches the multitude they are to that extent bettered. To that extent the saint has not lived and suffered in vain.

All religion, philosophy, art, heroism, is the attempt of the individual to make intelligible to some other soul—in concrete moral, in uttered word, in carven stone, in acted deed—that vision of the perfect which suffuses his being. If he considered the masses and strove to reach them, the magnitude of his task would overwhelm him, his tongue would cleave to his mouth, his hand would lose its cunning. But he scorns the masses as Philistines, children of darkness, unregenerate sinners, and his very scorn nerves him to fashion his revelation in some form that will appeal to the chosen few,—the elect whom alone he deems it his mission to save. He does not know, it is as well he should not know, that these few in the course of the seasons will enlighten the many.

Let us vary the metaphor. The great thinker scales the mountain-side, and delves deep into its caverns for the ore of truth. What cares he that the unthinking multitude are surging and wrangling at its base? what cares he though he have only strength to bear his precious burden to the surface? There at the surface it will be seen and recognized at its value by the one or two strenuous spirits who have followed in his traces. That thought heartens him to his task. But his followers have also their appointed task. Theirs it is to bear the nugget

down into the market where it shall eventually be cleansed of all dross, be rent into fragments, and pass into the common currency.

Thoughts that great hearts once broke for, we
 Breathe cheaply in the common air.
 The dust we trample heedlessly
 Throbb'd once in saints and heroes rare,
 Who perished, opening for their race
 New pathways to the commonplace.

The oracle has its interpreters. Buddha has his prophets, Goethe his commentators, Shakespeare his Gervinus, Kant his Cousin. Cousin and Gervinus, commentator, prophet, and interpreter, each in his own way is doing work as urgent as that of his master. Macaulay has been somewhat sneeringly called an ambassador from the educated few to the uneducated many. The sneer is in fact his highest applause, the curse is a blessing. We reverence the discoverer, but the pioneer, the settler, the colonist, the citizen, who succeed him form each an indispensable link in a mighty chain. Nature looks with equal eye on all.

This, then, is the history of all intellectual progress. The man who lives on the higher plane of his own being, who with mighty efforts has surmounted commonplaces, traditions, and conventions (surmounted, not skirted their base), and who has strength enough to carry his intelligence a furlong further into chaos, to snatch from the formless and the void the thought that shall revolutionize society in the coming generations, rarely has strength enough also to mould it into the logical and verbal perfection which will appeal to all educated and thinking men. Hence the obscurity that is complained of in a Browning, a Whitman, even an Emerson. But other men struggling towards the same goal, who have had their steps directed and their pathway smoothed by the original explorer, can use their untaxed energies in giving form and symmetry to the new truth. These men may even have more strength and use it more tellingly than the men who live on what we have called the higher plane. Tennyson is a greater poet than Whitman, though Whitman's chief concern is with the idea, and Tennyson's with forms of expression. The discoverer of the felicitous word is as original as the discoverer of the new idea, and may be the greater man of the two.

Nature, indeed, refuses to be classified, she laughs at scientific precision. You cannot draw lines through the rainbow, and say here yellow begins and green ends. The same difficulty attends any effort to distinguish sharply idealist from realist. Hitherto we have been endeavoring in a broad and general way to indicate the progress of the idea in the great creative period,—the idealistic period. To fall back upon Thoreau's figure, the idealistic is that period when the ecstatic vision is revealed and interpreted to the hundreds on the mount. But its mission is not yet ended, the thousands on the plain must be reached, the idea must become a part of the heritage of man. The thoughts that great hearts have broken for must be breathed cheaply in the common air, else the great hearts have broken in vain. Saints and heroes rare have perished in vain unless they have succeeded in opening for their race

New pathways to the commonplace.

Therefore the creative period is followed by the critical, the assimilative, the realistic period, when the idea is dissected and analyzed by the critic; played

upon by the kaleidoscopic fancy of the humorist and the artist in words; sneered at by the cynic; discussed, angrily and doubtfully at first, but later with wiser apprehension, by the Philistine, until at last its benign influence permeates everywhere.

On the realist the necessity of limiting himself, of sacrificing symmetry to strength, presses as heavily as on the idealist. He must ignore the higher reaches of the intelligence, he must take no share in the newer gospels, he must shut out the future and accept the present. What we call the ideal is in fact a dim prophetic picture of the future. When the future comes it will not be exactly like any man's ideal. Yet at present the ideal is the nearest approach we can make towards picturing the future. It looms up from the mist with uncertain outlines as the goal for our attainment, and the wisest cannot determine if it be a mirage or no. The realist wants firmer and more tangible truth: he finds it in the present, in the world of custom around us.

While the idealist is busy with the transcendental, the uncommon, the mysterious, the fantastic, the exceptional in nature (knowing that by her exceptions nature proves her rules), with morbid anatomy, with psychological problems, with the higher emotions and passions, with shapes of supernal beauty that represent to his fancy what humanity ought to be, and with heroic and romantic actions that represent what it ought to do, the realist prefers to deal with man and nature in their wonted moods, to take humanity as it *is*, to describe what it *does*. He accepts the conventions, proprieties, manners of the present as something fixed and absolute. Words harden into things for him. He scouts at the notion that great men should be a law to themselves, forgetting that it is because great men of old did break through the conventions and traditions of their time that we have any religion, any code of morals at all. He accepts the results of great thinking in the past, but only when they have become part of the mental equipment of all educated men, when custom has sanctioned them. Macaulay sees in the orphic sayings of Kant, Carlyle, and Emerson a deliberate attempt at being unintelligible. Howells, who comes later, accepts Carlyle and Emerson, but rejects Browning.

It may at first sight seem odd to rank Macaulay among the realists. Yet the realists of to-day are the legitimate posterity of Macaulay and Thackeray. Howells, indeed, has claimed descent from George Eliot and Hawthorne, but George Eliot is one of those rare spirits who refuse to be classified and from whom realist and idealist alike may learn. Hawthorne is as distinctly an idealist as Tennyson;—to the modern Americans he has imparted only certain graces of style. Thackeray has defined his own mental position in *Pendennis*, who had reached "a belief qualified with scorn in all things extant:" (cf. Emerson, who in his own pithy way sums up Thackeray's philosophy thus: "We must renounce ideals and accept London.") Macaulay's hospitality towards things extant has no dash of scorn. His attitude is that of the comfortable British Philistine accepting current faiths, current traditions, without inquiring into their basis. The better fashion of the moment represents abstract truth to him. He has no court of appeal at which to reverse the judgments of the past. There is something very characteristic in his favorite trick of comparing with each other the famous men of literature or history and according to each his precise share of glory, as if the sliding scale of his own time were unalterable. And as in this

way he husbanded the energy that might have been utilized in examining into premises, he could devote all his powers to expounding and (in the better sense) vulgarizing conclusions.

And this is the mission of the realist. He suppresses that soul within him which would soar into the high ancestral spaces, he develops that soul which

With tenacious organs holds in love
And clinging lust the world in its embraces.

It is the latter soul Howells has cultivated most assiduously, withdrawing from and repelling that other soul which found expression in many of his youthful poems, played fitfully about "A Foregone Conclusion," and flared up for a moment, just before its final extinction, in "The Undiscovered Country." *His* hate, too, is the measure of his love. He distrusts the ideal as heartily as the idealist distrusts the real. The author of "The Pilot's Story" is found in his maturer age speaking in these terms of poetry: "There are black moments when, honestly between ourselves and the reader, the spectacle of any mature lady or gentleman proposing to put his or her thoughts and feelings into rhymes affects us much as the sight of some respected person might if we met him jiggling or caracoling down the street instead of modestly walking." To be sure, one must not take this jesting too seriously. Yet it seems the sort of jest that conceals the sincere word. And at all events it aptly illustrates the prevailing mood of the realist, the impulse to look upon his fellows from the stand-point of clothes and manners. Paterfamilias, honest, respectable, humdrum,—that is the true man to the realist. Paterfamilias's proper speech is prose, just as his proper movement is a walk. Yet there is something beneath the conventional man in the tailor-made clothes which at times will out, and in rhythmic words, in rhythmic movements, he somehow seems to express a higher and truer and even a more real self. Society is but a thin crust of custom laid over volcanic passions. "O Heaven!" says Teufelsdröckh in "Sartor Resartus," "it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh." So speaks the idealist. *He* looks at man from within,—the realist, from without. The shadow-system is Howells's concern. Paterfamilias, with his whiskers, his clothes, his prayer-book, and his small talk, represents the real man to him, not the awful Divine Essence beneath the simulacrum, which but for the accident of birth, the specious phenomena of time and space, might have taken on some totally different simulacrum, might have been clothed in the flesh of Mussulman, Hindoo, or Cannibal, and still been the same ME.

The realist is, in fact, another symptom of the prevailing agnosticism. He, too, aims to confine himself within the limits of the knowable. Paterfamilias may be a simulacrum, yet it is *his* features that the photographing sun binds upon cunningly prepared paper, *his* traits that we most readily discuss and define in the arbitrary collocation of sounds which we call language. Paterfamilias, the photograph, language,—these things our senses testify to, and the agnostic accepts no other testimony. Here, to be sure, is a measure of truth. Yet, after

all, these things,—will they be to-morrow as they are to-day? Will language and the photograph report the same *Paterfamilias*? nay, will it be the same language and the same photograph? Let us trust that all will have developed into higher things, that as progress has been the law of the past it will be the law of the future. Idealism is an effort towards the future,—it is the salient energy; realism, as Emerson says of conservatism, the pause on the last movement.

Yet the pause, too, is right. We must take breath, we must allow our fellows to catch up with us. Progress means not the progress of the individual, but of the race. Differentiation is a temporary expedient; the aim of nature is solidarity. To borrow two ugly words from Herbert Spencer, we proceed from a crass homogeneity, through heterogeneity, to a fully-developed homogeneity. Man, who began in lawless democracy, could only through the successive stages of oligarchies, despotisms, monarchies, reach the highly-organized democracy whose promise we see to-day.

God is a democrat; he loves the child of the idea no better than he does the Philistine. The realist's love for the Philistine places him, by so much, nearer to God. Moses by wrath and haughtiness forfeited to Joshua the privilege of leading the people into the promised land. The realist is the modern Joshua. He estimates himself more humbly than the idealist. His own preferences are less likely to represent general principles to him. If he does not like cakes and ale, he at least has no scorn for his brother who does. "Ah! poor Real Life which I love," cries Howells, in his earliest novel "Their Wedding Journey," "can I make others share the delight I find in thy foolish and insipid face?" Howells's dislike of the ideal largely arises from its intellectual phariseism, its uncharitableness to common folk, its glorification of genius into an aristocracy that can do no wrong. "We do not despair," says the Editor's Study, "of the day when the poor honest herd of humankind shall give universal utterance to the universal instinct, and shall hold selfish power in politics, in art, in religion, for the devil that it is; when neither its crazy pride nor its amusing vanity shall be flattered by the puissance of the 'geniuses' who have forgotten their duty to the common weakness and have abused it to their own glory. In that day we shall shudder at many monsters of passion, of self-indulgence, of heartlessness, whom we still more or less openly adore for their 'genius,' and shall account no man worshipful whom we do not feel and know to be good." Elsewhere the Study rejoices that "the penetrating spirit of democracy has found its expression in the very quality of literature; the old oligarchic republic of letters is passing; already we have glimpses of the Commune." And still again the owner of the Study exhorts us to consider the view of a correspondent who looked upon novel-reading as an amusement, like horse-racing or card-playing, for which he had no time when he entered upon the serious business of life, and "not to dismiss it with high literary scorn as that of some Bæotian dull to the beauty of art,"—which indeed is the lordly manner of the Idealist. "Refuse it as we may, it is still the feeling of the vast majority of people for whom life is earnest, and who find only a distorted and misleading likeness of it in our books. We may fold ourselves in our gowns and close the doors of our studies, and affect to despise this rude voice; but we cannot shut it out." To Matthew Arnold, for example, the voices of the vast majority are as sounding brass, only the remnant are worth considering.

East and West are contraries, yet in order to go north the ship must tack first to the east and then to the west. The East cries, "Lo, here is the way!" and the West cries, "Lo, here is the way!" but the mariner knows that he cannot give implicit credence to either, though he must yield a half-faith to both. And as he follows the north star by sailing first to the east and then to the west, so man travels his appointed path, through continuous action and reaction,—from radicalism to conservatism, from idealism to realism,—with the net result of keeping on the straight line of truth.

A curious contrast suggests itself between Émile Zola's "*La Terre*" (G. Charpentier, Paris) and Harold Frederic's "*Seth's Brother's Wife*" (Scribners). Both are "realistic" novels. Both are studies of country life,—one in France and the other in America. Zola's picture is literally the naked truth; in Frederic's the truth is veiled and clothed in the conventional garb which the American novelist is obliged to assume. It is doubtful whether the average morality of the American peasantry is superior to that of the French. But no American novelist would be allowed to dwell upon this phase of our country life. We need not now discuss whether this is or is not for the best. The startling thing is that with all Zola's frankness, his nastiness, if you will, indeed, with all his exaggeration,—for Zola does give unnecessary prominence to mere wickedness,—the country life he pictures is not so repellent, so raw, so depressingly coarse and ugly, as the country life of Mr. Frederic's novel. Partly, of course, this is owing to the fact that Zola is a great genius, and Frederic only a man of considerable talent (a genius cannot help coloring his work with the high lights of his own imagination), but in far greater measure it is due to the fact which Hawthorne often commented upon, that our country is as yet too young and too crude to afford a lodgment for the romantic or the poetical. Life outside of our great cities is crass, unformed, uncouth: the picturesque element can only be added by time. Mr. Frederic has given us a truthful sketch. But we infinitely prefer Zola. And if you want to contrast American with French country life you should obtain not Zola in the original, but Zola in George D. Cox's translation (Petersons), which leaves out the nastiness, with no serious detriment to an exceptionally strong and powerful piece of fiction.

A very curious book, entitled "*It is the Law*," has been written by T. E. Willson. A young gentleman who is uncertain whether he is in love with a married woman or his own aunt, but overwhelms them both with caresses, an uncle who marries his niece when she is only twelve and beguiles the honey-moon by telling her unclean stories, gentlemen with two wives, each of whom is the only legal wife within the boundaries of different States, gentlemen with three wives, ladies with two husbands, and ladies with three husbands, all in the same delightful predicament, and all continually weaving themselves into the woof of each other's lives, form such a curious net-work of adultery and incest, within the limits of lawful wedlock, that the reader finds it difficult to keep the thread of the story, especially as the novel, though clever in parts, is thrown together hastily and inartistically. The evident aim of the author has been to call attention to the shameful condition of our marriage and divorce laws, and, by inference, to urge the necessity of Federal intervention.

CURRENT NOTES.

IT is time that respectable merchants combined with consumers for the suppression of all gift, prize, and lottery schemes in connection with the sale of articles of merchandise. These schemes are not only demoralizing to legitimate business and to the morals of the community, but in the extent to which they are being carried in the sale of articles of food have become a source of great danger to the public health. They are, no matter in what form they appear, nothing more nor less than devices to swindle honest and unsuspecting people.

It is gratifying to learn that in some instances the officers of the law have taken hold of the matter. In New York, and also in Chicago, parties who in this way offered gifts to purchasers of their packages have recently been arrested upon indictments for lottery swindling. The latest candidates, both for public execration and criminal prosecution, are the manufacturers of the alum baking powders, who are, both by means of gifts and lottery tickets, disposing of large quantities of their corrosively poisonous compounds, which are so well known to be detrimental to health that no housekeeper will admit them to her kitchen knowingly. This form of swindle is not only being peddled from house to house, but, under the promise of large profits to be realized, the manufacturers are intrenching themselves behind the counters of many grocers by getting them to offer the alum goods with the gifts or lottery tickets attached, thereby shifting the liability to prosecution, in part, upon other and perhaps innocent parties. Every grocer or dealer, for instance, who sells or offers for sale any of the prize or lottery baking powders is a criminal in the eye of the law, and liable, upon conviction, to fine and imprisonment, while those who sell the gift goods are, morally, as responsible, for they are offering an inducement, or prize, to housekeepers to use a food that contains a corrosive poison. This is a predicament in which it is not possible that merchants will care to place themselves when they come to think seriously of the matter.

It must be borne in mind that every one of these gift or prize baking powders are alum baking powders. These powders cost less than four cents a pound to produce; the gift or prize costs but a few cents more. They are sold at the price of a first-class baking powder, so that the swindle, in a commercial sense, is enormous. But the chief iniquity of the business consists in selling, as presumably wholesome, an article of a positively injurious character, and by means of gifts or bribes inducing servants or unsuspecting housekeepers to purchase and use it in our daily food.

There should be some prompt method of reaching these dangerous practices and punishing the parties engaged in their promotion. If the present laws are not ample, we commend the matter to the consideration of our State Board of Health for recommendation of such additional legislation as shall be effective for the protection of the public.

"A MISS is as good as a mile," a proverb which in its present form is nonsense, is therefore conjectured to have been originally "An inch of a miss is as good as a mile," corresponding to the German "Almost never killed a fly"

(*Beinahe bringt keine Mücke um*), the Danish "All-but saved many a man" (*Nær hielper mangen Mand*) and "Almost kills no man" (*Nærvæd slauer ingen Mand ihjel*), and, indeed, to the old English "Almost was never hanged." But it is not impossible that the proverb originally stood "Amis is as good as Amile," these being the names of two legendary soldiers of Charlemagne, titular heroes of a famous *chanson de geste*, who were as like one another as the two Dromios of Shakespeare, who took up each other's quarrels, and who after being adopted into the traditions of the Church as martyrs might be invoked indifferently.

HORSFORD'S ACID PHOSPHATE IMPROVES NUTRITION.—Dr. A. Trau, Philadelphia, says, "It promotes digestion, and improves general nutrition of the nervous system."

"A FEATHER in his cap," an expression signifying honor, distinction, arose from the custom prevalent among the ancient Syrians and perpetuated to this day among the various savage or semi-civilized tribes of Asia and America of adding a new feather to their head-gear for every enemy slain. In the days of chivalry the maiden knight received his casque featherless and won his plumes as he had won his spurs. In a manuscript written by Richard Hansard in 1598 and preserved in the British Museum, it is said of the Hungarians, "It hath been an antient custom among them that none shoulde wear a fether but he who had killed a Turk, to whom onlie yt was lawful to shew the number of fethers in his cappe." In Scotland and Wales it is still customary for the sportsman who kills the first woodcock to pluck out a feather and stick it in his cap.


HORSFORD'S ACID PHOSPHATE IN NERVOUS DEBILITY.—Dr. W. J. Burt, Austin, Texas, says, "I used it in a case of nervous debility, and very great improvement followed."

AN interesting experiment will be tried in *Lippincott's* for May, which will be a No-Name number, contributed to by some of the most popular writers in America, whose names will be divulged in a future number.

HORSFORD'S ACID PHOSPHATE THE BEST RESTORER.—Dr. T. C. Smith, Charlotte, North Carolina, says, "It is an invaluable nerve-tonic, and the best restorer when the energies flag and the spirits droop."

EVERY one knows that cocoa is an excellent tonic. Taken in the morning, at breakfast, it has no equal for nutrition and strengthening qualities; but it can be taken with advantage at any time. It is especially recommended for nursing mothers, to whom its benefits are invaluable. Unfortunately, cocoa is sometimes mixed with starch, arrow-root, or sugar, and thus loses a great part of its special properties; hence great care should be taken to procure the best in the market. Baker's Breakfast Cocoa and Chocolate preparations have long been the standard of excellence, and are guaranteed absolutely pure.

HORSFORD'S ACID PHOSPHATE IMPORTANT.—Dr. T. C. Smith, Charlotte, North Carolina, says, "I attach to it the highest importance, not only as an agreeable cooling drink, but as a therapeutic agent of well-defined and specific value."



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